

BANDWAGON



July-August 1969



CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

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BANDWAGON



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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The photograph that appears on our cover was taken in 1933 by Harry A. Atwell in Chicago, Illinois. A work team of baggage stock is being used in erecting the big top.

"The Whale" Jim Whelan, boss canvasman is shown on the left supervising. Photo from the Pfening Collection.

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CURATOR APPOINTED

John H. Hurdle, a long time member of the Circus Historical Society, has been appointed Curator of the Ringling Circus Museum, Sarasota, Florida. The appointment is effective September 1, 1969.

Mr. Hurdle has been Assistant Professor of Speech at the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, since 1955. He holds a B.A. degree from William & Mary College as well as an M.A. from the University of Tulsa. Both degrees are in fine arts.

For the past six summers John Hurdle has been production supervisor of the Richmond, Virginia, Summer Arts Festival. He is a member of the CFA and the CMB.

Mr. Hurdle follows two other CHS members in his new position.

AWARDS COMMITTEE TO MEET IN FLORIDA

The Awards Committee of the Circus Hall of Fame, Sarasota, Florida will meet for the first time in Sarasota. In the past the group has met to make its selection at CFA and CHS conventions.

The group will gather early in January during the period just before the opening of the 100th season of the Ringling-Barnum Circus.

For a number of years the Hall of Fame awards were announced and presented at the opening performance of the Big Show.

Col. Bill Naramore, director of the Hall of Fame recently returned from Paris, France, where a TV circus program was taped for viewing in the fall. The program was produced in connection with the Hall of Fame.

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- 1966 All six issues.
- 1967 All six issues.
- 1968 To date.

The above issues are available but we have only a few of some. Refunds will be sent, when an issue is depleted. While they last \$1.00 each, we pay postage.

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The ORGAN IS THE WORLD'S LEADING MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR CIRCUS AND VARIETY.

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The ORGAN contains contributions in German, English, and French and is distributed world-wide. The magazine's address lists represent a "Who's Who" in the world of the circus and variety.

There are about 50 pages of news columns, stories and pictures in an average edition, and 100 pages of advertisements, many on multi-colored art paper.

The Yellow Pages of ORGAN offer the programs of all great international circuses and varieties from throughout the world.

The Orton Circus

78 Years of struggles and triumphs

By Adrian D. Sharpe

A great part of the material in this article was furnished by Mrs. William H. (Babe) Woodcock, Sr. Mrs. Woodcock is the youngest daughter of R. Z. Orton, the youngest son of Hiram Orton, founder of the original Orton Circus. Without her help this article would not have been possible.

Much of the route material came from the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Much has been written about the early circus that toured the countryside seventy five to one hundred years ago. However, we have never read anything about the times and conditions that prevailed during those periods or the transportation problems moving a circus from town to town during those days.

Following the Civil War there was a great depression that started in 1873 and lasted about twenty five years or until the period of the Spanish American War in the late 1890's.

My father was born in 1854 and raised on a farm in Central Iowa. He married and started farming in 1873, the year of the great depression. He gave me much of my information about those early days. There were no railroads, telegraph or even Newspapers.

The roads were only trails across the prairies. These were the conditions that prevailed when the early circus men went through, the country. We will mention a few of those early Pioneer Circus Men.

Among and apart from the many early wagon shows that toured the country from north to south, one of the longest on record was a wagon show, known as the Orton Circus. Some kind of Orton Circus has toured the country, Spring, Summer and Fall from 1854 to 1932 inclusive, taking in three generations of Ortons. A period of seventy eight years.

Hiram Orton was the originator of the first Orton Circus, called Orton's Badger Circus. He is the grandfather of the last generation of Ortons to handle the show. Hiram Orton was born August 10, 1811 at Portage, Wisconsin only twenty miles from Baraboo where the famous Ringling Brothers made their start.

Hiram Orton had four sons, Miles the oldest son was born in Erie County, Pennsylvania in 1837. His other sons were Lester, Dennis and Arzy.



Hiram Orton, founded the Orton Circus in 1854. Author's Collection.

Hiram had been a Great Lakes sailor. He returned to the town of his birth, Portage, Wisconsin where his youngest son, Arzy was born in 1853.



Miles Orton was featured in this lithograph used around 1882. The original litho was presented to the Circus Hall of Fame, Sarasota, Florida, by Myron Orton.

In the spring of 1854, Hiram Orton started the Orton Badger Wagon Show from Portage on a journey through Wisconsin, Iowa and on down through Texas into the Cotton States. It does not take much imagination on the part of the reader to see what an undertaking it was in those days for a man with a family of young children, his youngest only one year old, to start on such a journey. It was frontier country all the way with no railroads, telegraph or good roads. Small streams had to be forded while large rivers were crossed by Ferry Boat. The Civil War was near at hand.

May we note here that much of the early entertainment was horsemanship. The working men started to the next town by midnight and hoped to get some sleep over the road but if it rained they had to wake up and help push the wagons out of the mud. The band and actors stopped at the Village Hotel and ate breakfast there and then left early for the next stand arriving in the Band Wagon and would stop just outside the town. All the occupants would brush and then come into town playing to the joy of the towns people, with twelve horses hitched to the Band Wagon. Charley Tubbs drove a carriage and kept a trained leopard on the seat beside him.

There are always circus stories that pass on down through history from one generation to another. We might quote here one that seems to have followed that pattern. The man named Kennedy, who was a rider, was bald as an egg and wore a wig to cover his head. Kennedy was a great horseman and very proud of his profession. He put on a lot of style. One day it rained and the lot was muddy. Kennedy came in on his two horses. The horses were sliding around and Kennedy slid off, landing in a mud hole so hard that his wig flipped off. The crowd just roared as they were not accustomed to seeing any one with a wig. Kennedy left the tent with his head covered with his hands. The band laughed so hard it had to stop playing.

There are some old circus acts that have followed on down through the last hundred years. This one is called the Peter Jenkins act. A rider comes into the ring and a bum or drunk comes down out of the audience and says he can ride better than the rider. After some discussion with the ring master

he is allowed to try or leave the circus. After trying and removing his clothes, while riding, down to his tights he proves to be none other than Miles Orton the expert rider. The act is still used by some small shows, called the riding school.

After returning to the home base at Portage, Wisconsin from the first tour, the Orton Badger Circus opened its winter season of 1856 on September 13, at Delavan, Wisconsin, for a tour that was to not bring them home for a full year. Moving into Illinois after three stands in Wisconsin, the show played the full month of October in Illinois and Missouri. November was spent in Arkansas, with more dates in that state lasting until December 17. The rest of December 1856 the show played small towns in Louisiana, with names like Spring Hill, Farmerville, Shiloh, Homer and Sparta.

The last date of 1856 was Bellevue, Louisiana on December 31. The show may have layed off in Bellevue, or at least in that area, for the month of January 1857. Opening again on February 1, 1857 in Central Store, Louisiana the show soon moved into Texas for five stands before heading back across Louisiana towards the deep south where the show played until the early part of July. The show moved into Fayetteville, Tennessee, on July 4, and made five stands before entering Kentucky for 30 dates. Tennessee must have been good as Orton took his show back in that state on August 17 for 38 more dates. A few dates quickly took the show back through Kentucky into Illinois on October 6, and on north with three dates in Wisconsin before closing on November 9th in Portage.

The above route information came from the Circus World Museum, in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The full route is on file at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, in Madison. A number of years of the Orton Circus routes were given to the Historical Society by Earl Chapin May, whose father, Cy, was reported to have been on the show during these years.

In the spring of 1858, Hiram Orton formed a partnership with Pardon A. Older, and the title of the show became The Orton and Older's Great Southern Circus. The show opened in Portage on May 9, 1858 and headed on a long journey through Wisconsin, Iowa and down through Texas into the cotton states.

It does not take much imagination on the part of the reader to see what an undertaking it was in those days for a man with a family of young children, his youngest only one year old, to start on a tour that turned out to last nearly three full years. It was frontier country all the way with no railroads, telegraph or good roads. Small streams had to be forded while the larger rivers were crossed by ferry boat. The Civil War

was near at hand, but the show toured continually until late in the summer of 1860 with only one brief layoff.

The big top was a 100 foot round top with no quarter poles. All of the animals were housed in the main tent. The performers consisted of Hiram's family. His two sons Miles, then about 17 and a younger brother Dennis with Hiram's cousin Tyle Orton, were the riders. Charlie Tubbs, was a strong man and George Constable was the clown, with Hiram Orton also appearing in clown face. There were twelve in the entire company. A two horse carrying act was a feature along with a brass band.

In April of 1857 the show lost its tent when a livery stable nearby was destroyed by fire, in Montgomery, Alabama. A couple of horses were also lost along with the fancy harness and buggy owned by P. A. Older.

The extensive tour beginning on May 9, 1858 came to a close on September 15, 1860 in Rockford, Illinois.

Make no Mistake; be Sure of the Date of the Coming of

Miles Orton's

NEW MASTODON SHOWS



A Congress of Wonders,
Mammoth Trained Wild Beast Show,
Allegorical Street Pageants,
And a Vast Menagerie.

A Thousand Triumphs of the
Track. The New Show of the
Period. A Convocation of Rare-
ties, and a Freshet of Wild
Beasts. A Synod of Surprising
Beauties, and a Trinity of Aro-
nic Champions, engrossing all
the Greatest Bareback Riders
in the World.



This newspaper ad was used to announce the coming of the Orton show to Wilmington, Ohio in 1882. Babe Woodcock Collection.

Space will not permit a full day to day listing of the route, provided by the Circus World Museum, however here is a breakdown by states:

1 Wisconsin	15 Stands
2 Iowa	36 Stands
3 Missouri	18 Stands
4 Illinois	17 Stands
5 Indiana	3 Stands
6 Kentucky	14 Stands
7 Tennessee	17 Stands

8 Mississippi	9 Stands
9 Alabama	3 Stands
10 Tennessee	22 Stands
11 Alabama	34 Stands
12 Georgia	1 Stand
13 Alabama	14 Stands
14 Georgia	6 Stands
15 Florida	14 Stands
16 Georgia	14 Stands
17 South Carolina	25 Stands
18 North Carolina	23 Stands
19 Virginia	44 Stands
20 Tennessee	2 Stands
21 Virginia	5 Stands
22 Tennessee	2 Stands
23 Alabama	34 Stands
24 Mississippi	11 Stands
25 Arkansas	27 Stands
26 Texas	84 Stands
27 Louisiana	18 Stands
28 Mississippi	15 Stands
29 Alabama	23 Stands
30 Tennessee	5 Stands
31 Kentucky	38 Stands
32 Indiana	3 Stands
33 Illinois	19 Stands
34 Iowa	48 Stands
35 Minnesota	17 Stands
36 Wisconsin	12 Stands
37 Illinois	5 Stands

The Orton and Older Circus on its 1858, 1859 and 1860 tour played eighteen states. They crossed thirty seven state lines in 123 weeks and made 705 stands, crossing the Blue Ridge, the Appalachian, the Old Smokies, the Ozarks and other Mountains. They went from Portage, Wisconsin south to Tallahassee then to Jacksonville, Florida and north to Richmond, Virginia where they played three days. Then to Fredericksburg for two days. They might have watered their horses in Bull Creek only months before the famous Battle of Bull Run. They then headed south for Texas down through the country that Old John Robinson claimed Squatters rights to as his Circus Domain. Orton and Older were not alone in that territory. There were perhaps a dozen other tent shows plying for their share of the business or trying to be first after the tobacco or cotton crops just ahead of the Civil War.

Orton and Older wagoned on to Texas where they entered the State at the bloody town of New Boston. Then on to Galveston. Then turned north on their way back to Wisconsin. We will never know how many wagons broke down or horses died on that trip. They played forty eight stands in Iowa on the way back. They played some of the same towns the writer played with a wagon show half a century later in 1906. We, no doubt, stopped at some of the same hotels. I will make a guess that I slept in some beds that had not been renewed with a straw tick since Hiram slept there fifty years before.

The Orton and Older Circus was more fortunate than some as they ar-

twenty or more men — others with one hundred or more. With no railroads, no telegraph and very few law enforcement officers for protection, a small wagon show traveling through the country was truly on its own.

It was at New Boston, Texas in 1867 that the Orton Show was attacked. New Boston, Texas is near Texarkana on the Arkansas border. There was a gang that called themselves the Cullen Baker Gang. It was perhaps their plan to rob the show for money or anything they wanted, then make off with the horses or anything else. They had bragged so much about what they intended to do that a citizen informed the Circus Management that the bandits intended to ride their horses, twenty five or more, right into the tent through the front door. The Management ordered the side-walls dropped, if they did this, so the

South. Not all the outlaws were in Texas. My father's brother, Thomas Sharpe, was in the Union Army stationed at Memphis, Tennessee. Both the Union and the Southern Army were stationed there. There had been a gang of outlaws a hundred or more operating near Memphis. The people came to the Army and asked for protection. The army sent out scouts to try to locate the outlaws. By the help of an old negro woman, they located them one night. The next day they sent out a thousand cavalry men. At day break they rounded up the outlaws and shot them. I asked my uncle who buried the dead. He said he did not know. It was their business to clean out the gang. My uncle told me that story fifty years after the war.

We are unable to furnish more information on the route of the Orton Circus in 1867 but they did operate out of Ortonville west of Des Moines, Iowa from then on.

There is no doubt, that one reason the Cole people left the Orton show was — the Orton people clung to the small towns and the middle west while the Cole people wanted to get into the big time. Mary Ann had been raised on her father's circus in the east playing such towns as New York, Boston and Philadelphia. The Cole Circus went on railroad. The W. W. Cole's New York and New Orleans Circus and Menagerie opened in 1873. The next year marked the beginning of the Great Depression or hard times which started in the east and worked west. With the railroads moving to the west coast in the late 60's, many railroad shows pushed west looking for better times. The Dan Costello's Circus went coast to coast by rail in 1869.

W. W. Cole's Great New York and New Orleans Railroad Circus arrived in San Francisco in June, 1873.

The 1879 season was rather barren for the Pacific Coast Circus fans, their

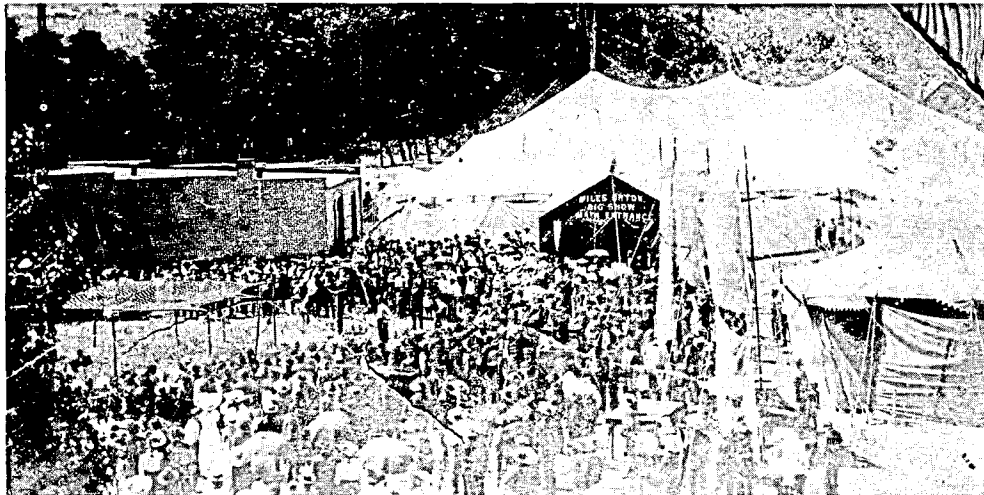


By 1901 Arzy Orton's children played in a band featured with the Circus. Left to right are Laurance, Grace, Father Arzy, Criley and Nellie. Babe Woodcock Collection.

people could get out. Soon after the show started they did ride in twenty five strong and the crowd rushed out. A fight ensued inside the tent. Among the audience were thirteen soldiers, who rushed to their barracks and got their rifles and returned to the tent just as one of the Orton boys was shot in the back. That boy was Arzy Orton. He had returned to the band stand to retrieve his cornet. When the smoke cleared away there were eleven dead bandits on the ground.

The others were captured by the citizens. Arzy Orton, the youngest of the Hiram Orton family, did not die from the shot in his back but it perhaps furnished an ailment that followed him to his death. Touring the Lone Star State right after four years of a bloody war made touring Texas a dangerous undertaking. Old John Robinson, that doughty Cincinnati Southerner, found it necessary to post his son Gil at his tent front door, holding a loaded rifle to discourage gun toting Texas gate crashers.

For some time after the Civil War the Government found it necessary to keep an army on police duty in the



During those years my father lived near Marshalltown, Iowa. The Yankee Robinson Circus was one coming there. He said Yankee Robinson's big advertisement was the forty horses on the Band Wagon. He watched the circus hitch up the forty horse team on the lot and drive them up town. He said all the parade they had was the forty horse Band Wagon team. My father said the first railroad show that came to Marshalltown stopped their flat cars at the station platform. A gang of men lifted the cages that were on the train cross wise by hand to the station platform. The seats and tents were hauled piece meal from the cars to the lot.

For several years following the season of 1867, W. W. Cole was interested in the ownership and management of the Orton Circus. In 1871, Cole and his mother Mary Ann Cole Orton, wife of Miles Orton since 1862, left the Orton Circus and started a circus of their own out of Quincy, Illinois as the Cole's Colonial Shows.

The Miles Orton Circus is shown on the lot. Bill Woodcock had written on the back "appears to be the 2 car show Miles was operating when he died in 1903". A high dive free act is shown at the left. Babe Woodcock Collection.

only fair was the Royal Italian Circus in San Francisco. With the influx of Rail Road Shows pushing west, the eastern Depression may have caught up with them.

In the fall of 1880 W. W. Cole's Massive Shows pulled into San Francisco in October with plans to ship the show to Australia and New Zealand. The outfit left the Harbor on October 23rd after playing an eight day stand. It returned in May, 1881 and played a date in May 23rd, to June 5th in San Francisco with an impressive new title. W. W. Cole's Mammoth Circus Menagerie and Trained Animals. The Show moved south to Los Angeles in June with another long run to Yuma and Tucson. Then working east across the United States to the eastern seaboard

THE ORIGINAL

MILES ORTON

SOUTHERN SHOWS,

Mr.

FAMOUS THE WORLD OVER.

MILES ORTON THE FOUNDER.
NORMAN & MYRON ORTON,
OWNERS & MGRS.

and continuing on up to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

As the close of the 1886 season the show was sold at auction, Cole having in the meantime become interested in the Barnum Circus.

For several years following the departure of the Cole people from the Orton Show, Miles Orton was associated with Burr Robbins Circus. In 1880 Miles Orton put out a railroad show but with the depression the venture was unsuccessful. Being an election year the Republicans elected James A. Garfield, President. Farm prices were low, corn on the Iowa farm was down to 10c per bushel. Cotton and all southern crops were in the same proportion.

In 1882 Miles Orton was back again with his circus — The Mastodon Royal Menagerie. Al Fields was business manager and clown; Miles Orton did a riding act having a little boy dressed in a Lord Fauntleroy suit, stand on his head while riding around the ring; A Congress of Triumph, of the track, a new show of that period and a trinity of Aranic Champions, engrossing all the greatest bare back riders, the Spanish Circus, School of Canine Graduates, the four and five year olds Allie and Bernard doing a head long dive from a great height. A street parade was given at ten. Crowds filled the tent at Wilmington. Miles Orton's brothers Dennis, Lester and Arzy all traveled with the show.

William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was organized in 1882. The initial performance was given in Omaha, Nebraska in May 1883. The show worked east. Usually the shows engagements were in Parks, Fairs and similar places.

Another election year was 1884. Prices had been so low and times so hard the voters once more turned out the Republicans and elected Grover Cleveland, a Democrat. That was the spring the Ringling Brothers chose to start in the Circus business with a tent

This letterhead was used in 1906. The colors are unknown. Babe Woodcock Collection.

only 45x90 feet. Fayette L. Robinson (Yankee Robinson) then sixty years of age and in poor financial shape joined with the Ringling Boys for their start that first year. He remained with them until September 4, 1884 when he died in Jefferson, Iowa. Over the grave in the Jefferson Cemetery stands a tall brown marble monument erected by the Ringling and Sells Brothers.

In 1883 and 1884 Miles Orton followed up with his Rail Road Shows; the show was cut to Four Cars. That year they had a bad fire that killed eleven people. In the fall of 1884 his father, Hiram Orton, died September 4th at



Mother (Mrs. Miles) Orton is shown with the family band in this photo taken around 1906. Shown are Laurance, Criley, Miles II, Grace, Arzy, Baynard, Nellie, Mother Sarah and Babe, with the drum. Babe Woodcock Collection.

Norris, Michigan at the Age of Seventy Three. Thirty years with the Circus, Fayette (Yankee) Robinson died the same day.

The writer was operating a show in Southern Minnesota and Dakota in 1912 and in one of the towns, I do not remember which town, they were tearing down a building on Main Street. They had removed the weather boarding on one side and underneath the siding was a stand of Circus paper — Ringling Brothers and Yankee Robinson Shows, complete with date, bright and clear. It had been covered with a coat of paper and siding for 28 years. I had a Kodak but at the time did not think the picture taking was worth it.

In 1886, Miles, with his second wife, Lizzie, and their family operated with Sam K. Tribby and Company New Mastodon Dime Circus and Menagerie on the railroad with Miles Orton, Manager. It continued during 1887.

That same year Miles Orton's brother, Arzy, built himself a new brick house of eight rooms on the farm at Ortonville and married Sarah his life help mate.

It was during that time John L. Sullivan, the pugilist, at the age of 19, accepted the challenge of a professional boxer, appearing in Boston, to box four rounds with him. With one blow Sullivan knocked the Professional into the orchestra. Sullivan was giving boxing exhibitions around the country and Adam Forepaugh at once brought John L. Sullivan on his circus to give boxing exhibitions during his 1887 Season offering a sum of money to any one that could stay four rounds. Later in 1889 Sullivan and Kilrain went 75 rounds bare knuckles at Richburg, Mississippi.

During Grover Cleveland's administration, low farm prices and labor trouble was causing Cleveland much unrest. The strike at the McCormick Harvester Plants in Chicago resulted in the Hay Market riot where people were killed. Eighteen eighty eight was another elec-

tion year and with all the unrest the voters once more turned out the Democrats and elected Benjamin Harrison, the Republican, President.

To give some proof of the hard time and low prices during the 1880's.

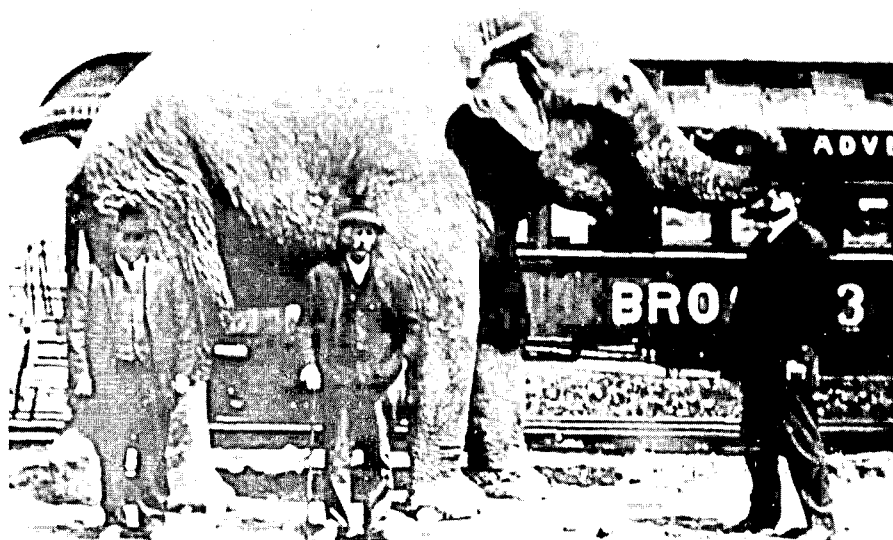
In 1881 some men in Hubbard, Iowa where my father lived bought thousands of bushels of corn at 10c per bushel and stored it in new cribs thinking the low prices was only a slump and a big profit could be made. In 1889 they sold the corn for less than they paid for it. What they had left after loss in weight and rot and what the rats had not eaten. But that was eighty years before Congress passed their anti-rat law and appropriated 45 million dollars to kill rats.

During the late 80's and the early 90's all circuses both large and small were battling for their share of the business. By 1890 the Ringling Brothers had grown large enough to go on rail. In 1890 Adam Forepaugh died and James A. Bailey bought his show. P. T. Barnum died in 1891 and James A. Bailey had the management of the Barnum and Bailey Show. The Spring of 1891 The Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Rail Road Shows opened at Baraboo, Wisconsin on May 2nd. The same Spring the Gollmar Brothers of Baraboo made their start with a wagon circus.

The Sells Brothers who had been playing the West Coast at the close of the 1891 Season left San Francisco for Australia. The venture proved unprofitable as an epidemic of glanders caused the show to have their horses put in quarantine upon arrival. The people of Sidney loaned the show their horses but these were practically useless. The Sells Brothers returned to San Francisco June 9, 1892.

Eighteen ninety two was another election year. Conditions had become so much worse by the end of Harrison's term, the voters once more turned to the Democrats and elected Grover Cleveland. The picture changed, however, when a severe financial panic swept the country a few months after he took office. Thousands of mortgages on farms were foreclosed, Railroads went into bankruptcy, labor quarrels made the situation worse. Meanwhile the amount of gold in the U. S. Treasury had reached a dangerous low point.

The depression during the 1880's kept the Orton Circus moving from one pattern to another. In 1892 with time and conditions worse Miles Orton joined with George W. Rentz's Circus and Menagerie and also joined hands with O'Brien and Dearley's Great American Circus and Menagerie. From then on it was known as George W. Rentz and Company; Rentz was manager, H. W. Link Agent, and Miles Orton Rider. They had 18 cars, an advance car, four cages, of animals, two elephants, three



Arzy Orton is shown, in the center, with "Hero" the elephant on the inflated 1916 railroad circus. Babe Woodcock Collection.

camels, eighty head of horses, two bands, calliope with 19 wagons in the parade, 14 mounted people and chariots. The canvas was a 110 foot round top with three middle pieces and a Menagerie top 100 feet. The side show was a 70x130 foot tent.

In 1892 Miles Orton and Rentz were out with 16 cars and wound up in 1893 victims of the depression. For the next four years Miles Orton with his broth-

ers had some kind of a show out in Iowa.

The writer was born in 1881 and by 1893 was a boy of 12. I do remember the calamity of that year. My father had moved from Central Iowa to near Lawrence, Kansas. By 1894, while all the circus men large and small were fighting for survival, the law makers were looking for some easy money and Congress passed the income tax bill. Grover Cleveland signed the bill into law at once. Nine months later the U. S. Supreme Court ruled the law unconstitutional. That was one break the circus men got. Labor caused Cleveland much trouble. The Pullman strike was called, closing the Pullman Company shops in Pullman, Illinois near Chicago. Cleveland sent federal troops to Chicago to stop the rioting.

On Easter Sunday, 1894, Jacob S. Coxey started from Massillon, Ohio for Washington, D.C. with 100 men. He recruited men along the way arriving in Washington on the first of May with 500 men with a petition for the President. Police rushed in the army. They were not permitted to present their petition. Coxey and others were arrested and jailed.

It was no better in 1895. The Great Wallace Circus opened in May at Peru, Indiana and went west to the coast that summer. No doubt, the Ringlings were glad to see Ben Wallace go for he was tough competition. I always heard his fighting weapon was price cutting. The great famine in India hit the country that year and farmers furnished free corn and wheat for the starving people. My father gave a wagon load of corn. I remember corn was 12c per bushel that day.

Another election year was 1896. James A. Bailey joined with the Sells Brothers that year and sent out the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers Enourmous Shows United. The circus

At Chilton Monday, June 12th

ORTON BROS. 3 RING B CIRCUS

MUSEUM AVIARY MENAGERIE
A Huge Tented Wonderland of International Sensations

An Assembly of the Most
REMARKABLE RIDERS IN THE WORLD
In Various Styles of Horsemanship
CREATIONS OF EQUESTRIAN ART
By the World's Greatest Exponents

MILES and NELLIE ORTON
The Ultimate Triumph of Arenic Achievement

An Eye Feast
Startling Contrasts
Intrepid Men & Women
In Audacious Deeds of
Skill and Daring in 2
Rings and in the Air.
A Concourse of
Mirth Makers
Providing Goals of Fun
for Old and Young

STARTLING
The
Largest
Living Elephant
"HERO"
\$25,000.00
Marvel
ASTONISHING
FEATURES

Equine Spectacle
World's National Endorse
Wild and Domestic
Trained Animals
Hippodrome Feats
Unheard of



An Unequaled Menagerie
An Incomparable Aviary
An Astonishing Museum

BIG STREET PARADE 12 o'clock noon
2 COMPLETE PERFORMANCES at 2 and 5 P. M. ONE TICKET ADMITS TO ALL
Doors open one hour earlier

This interesting newspaper ad was used during the 1916 season, for the Chilton, Wisconsin date. Circus World Museum Collection.

opened the season in April at Columbus, Ohio then headed west arriving in Washington and Oregon in August and on down the Pacific Coast to Los Angeles in September, hitting Texas at El Paso. They arrived in Kansas in October. The Great Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers Circus played Lawrence, Kansas late in October where we lived. My father took the entire family to the Circus. We took our dinners and sat on the blues. It was my first circus and the best I have ever seen. They had fourteen elephants, I counted them. That was 73 years ago and I have not missed many a circus since that time.

Eighteen ninety six was another election year and both Grover Cleveland and the voters had had enough. Wm. Jennings Bryan was running on the Democrat ticket on a free silver ticket. He wanted to take the gold out of the dollar and inflate the currency. His big speech was "You cannot crucify mankind on a cross of gold." The voters once more turned to the Republicans and Wm. McKinley was elected.

of stock, May Cooper charge of reserve seats, Gordon Orton rider, Norman Orton jockey rider, Myron Orton slack wire and juggling, Bernard Orton trapeze, Miles (the 2nd) and Bayard Orton acrobats, Grace Orton contortion, Lawrence Orton clown. Orton Brothers will have a double attraction on the outside of the tent. The high dive and an ascension on the wire also a military drill in town after supper. The circus was touring Kansas in 1898.

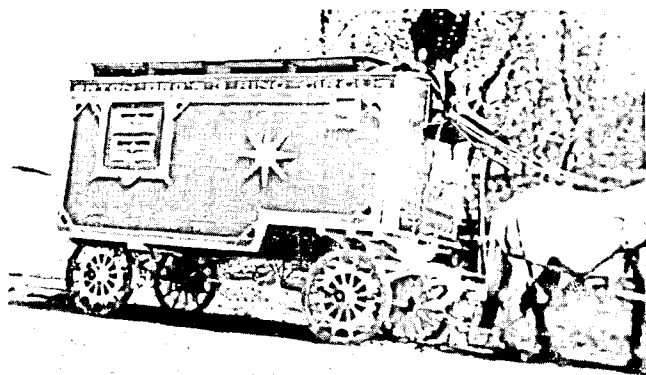
The Orton Brothers Circus toured the middle west during 1899 and 1900. In 1901 Arzy Orton took over and from then on the Orton Brothers Circus was the Arzy Orton Family Show. In 1901 Miles Orton joined Harris Nickle Plate Shows as principal rider, perhaps with his family, as they were all performers. In 1902 Miles Orton and his family moved to Florida. Jessie Bartlett McGee writes "I drove to Plant City, Florida in 1903, where I now live and saw a dog and pony show, the Miles Orton Show. I met the old man and talked with him about pioneer days of the

ron Orton were the owners and Managers.

MRS. WM. H. WOODCOCK (BABE ORTON) YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF ARZY ORTON, WRITES:

I remember my first try at the show business, taking place in a school house or hall. I was about three or four years old, I walked out in front of my brothers and sisters standing on the stage and sang the whole chorus of a song "You look awfully good to father". When the people clapped for me it made me so bashful, I would never, never do it again for any one. Years later I rode an Arabian white horse and sang a song under the tent.

For several years while we children were small we traveled in a covered wagon. All slept in the wagon and on long trips over the road we would stop out in the country, and unhitch the teams for the night. We kids would run up and down the road and have lots of fun, go to a farm house and buy milk, eggs and etc. My father was



The ticket wagon of the 1916 show is shown ready for parade. This as well as much of the other



Here, the elephant was advertised on the side of this elephant car in 1916. Babe Woodcock Collection.

The 1897 season found Miles Orton with the Frank A. Robbins New York Show as Equestrian Director and doing his bare back riding act.

In 1897 Arzy Orton wrote, "I have purchased wagons, canvas, seats, lights, etc. Miles Orton is getting together some of his show property to combine with mine. The show will be styled The Orton Brothers Show. We have been storing some show property away in an elevator of mine at Ortonville and will build a round house on the farm adjoining town at the old Orton Homestead. Between our two families will be the Ortons taking part in the performance. Five of Miles family and six of my family. In 1898 the Orton Brothers Circus with the Children's Lilliputian Dog and Pony Circus, will include Miles Orton, Manager, Arzy Orton Secretary and Treasurer, Mrs. Miles Orton front door, Mrs. Arzy Orton in charge of privileges, S. K. Tribey Advance with two assistants, Cooper Canvas boss, Jack Marical in charge

big top. He had nothing to say about his greatness but smiled when I mentioned the magnificent gray horses. He said the show was paying handsomely. It was probably his last trip." Miles Orton died a few days later at Key West, Florida. He was buried at Tallahassee, Florida. It was thought his sons Myron and Norman were with him. In 1904 Miles Orton Southern Railroad Shows opened at Suffolk, Virginia, October 10th to stay out all winter. His two sons took it out.

In 1905, the Miles Orton Show which received high praise in Miami was now visiting the Bahama Islands. The show left Nassau where opening performance was given to a packed tent. On February 8th the Nassau papers gave the show high praise but on April 6th the side show was destroyed by fire. One man was badly burned.

The Miles Orton Southern Railroad was destroyed by fire at the Seaboard Railroad depot in Tallahassee, Florida on January 14, 1906. Norman and My-

a good musician and taught all his children to play in the band, so we always had a family band. He taught us circus performing. Eventually I took up the snare drum as soon as I was big enough to carry the drum. My mother beat the bass drum. A few years later on we each had to drive a team and also hitch up the horses. If I had a balky horse in my team I had to get them on the lope, so they wouldn't stop before they got to the top of the next hill. In the Dakotas and Nebraska sandhills there were no good roads. We sometimes had to hire a guide to lead us to the next town. When we were ready to open up the show we would all walk to the center of town and form a circle in the center of the street. We would play two or three fast tunes, then my father would step out into the center of the group and tell the people about the wonders that were to take place down at the show grounds. A man was going to walk on a tight rope to the top of the tent pole and do several

tricks while on the way up there. That man was my brother Miles.

My mother and father always made their tent during the winter months. My mother made all the wardrobe. It was really beautiful work.

She always sold tickets for the show. One time on the wagon show she bought a dappled gray mare and a fine buggy to drive in over the road. She looked quite grand driving that rig from one town to another. One day I guess a bee must have stung that mare for she took off kicking the dashboard and snorting. Then she turned off quick spilling my mother alongside the road. Mother was shaken up pretty badly, but she never missed selling the tickets in that ticket wagon.

From about 1906 to 1915 my father would go to Des Moines in the fall after the circus season closed and buy a lot or two, build a couple of houses until he had ten houses to rent. He was a busy man with running the Circus in the summer time.

In 1913 my father bought an elephant named JUNE. The show always wintered in Iowa and traveled the central states.

equipment from Wm. P. Hall and Hall talked him into buying a thirteen car show, which was not only too large for him to finance, but put him into competition with a dozen or more Rail Road shows playing the regular Orton territory.

The Orton Circus with thirteen cars, 1 advance, 5 flats, 3 stocks, and 4 sleepers, in the train opened the 1916 season at Glenwood near Lancaster, Missouri on April 29th and worked north into Minnesota by May 9th where they ran into plenty of rain and snow.

That year he bought a large elephant named HERO from Honest Bill Newton. The Bull was a bad one to handle and one of the Newtons came along to handle him. It was at Elkton, South Dakota on May 15th when they were loading the train, Newton brought the big elephant HERO up to push some wagons. Instead of pushing the wagons with his head, which he could easily, the big bull just went around to the side and upset the wagon. Newton was hurt in the mishap and ran into the sleeper. A man came out with Newton's coat on and ran along down beside the train and ducked under the rail road

weather early in the season, success was impossible. The Orton Rail Road show never had a chance. But I think that the Orton people did about as well as the Wm. P. Hall shows did in 1905 when they went to the barn in mid season.

The next spring 1917 found the Orton Wagon Circus on the road in their old established territory, opening at their regular opening stand at Ortonville and working north to the Canada line and south to Texas, during the years of 1918, 19 and the 20's. During the world war there were boom prices but labor shortages on all shows, but business was good and some shows did make a big gain. In 1921 a short depression hit but did not last long.

Following the war period Arzy Orton had very poor health and went each winter to San Antonio, Texas for his health and eventually died there in 1923 at the age of seventy years.

Mr. Orton had spent his entire life in the Circus making his first start at one year old with his father Hiram Orton in 1854 out of Portage, Wisconsin and continuing on down through his life span with a wagon show based



The big show band is shown riding on a fab wagon in the parade of the 1916 Orton Bros. Circus. Babe Woodcock Collection.

May the writer add here, I first met Mr. Orton in the fall of 1906 when I came in off the Buchanan Yankee Robinson Show. It was in Des Moines, Mr. Orton was laying the foundation for a house in east Des Moines. We talked about the past season and he said we have a family show and do not put the money we make during the summer back into the show to make it larger, we build a house or two with the money.

MRS. WOODCOCK CONTINUES

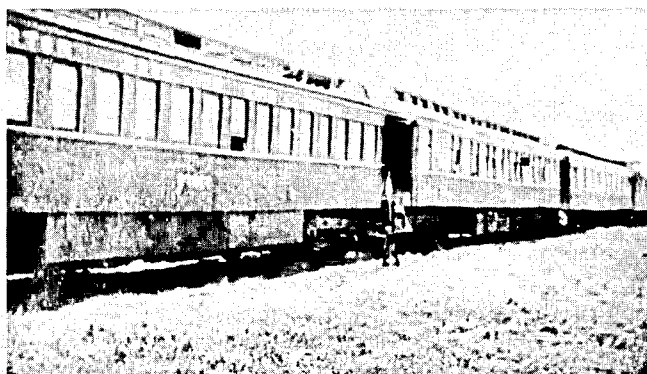
The years from the turn of the century until World War One time were very staple; supply and demand took care of prices and they were good and labor was in demand, and no high taxes to pay.

By 1916 Arzy Orton planned to go on rail with a small show perhaps two or three cars. He went to Lancaster, Missouri to buy some cars and other

car. The big bull after him thinking the man was Newton. When he ducked under the car the bull upset the bandwagon that was loaded on the flat car. The Bandwagon was the one used on the Cole Show. The elephant went into the country with half the town after him, he was eventually shot.

June first we were in Wisconsin and by the 15th in Michigan then returned to Minnesota and closed the fourth of July at Mora, Minnesota. From Mora the show was sent back to Lancaster. In the deal with Hall the show lost the Elephant June and the houses they had in Des Moines, Iowa all went to Hall.

The Ortons saved the horses on the show and finished the season with their wagon show. With the competition there was for a rail road show in 1916 it was almost impossible for any one with limited means to start a small rail road show, with no reputation to help as a rail road show, and no old seasoned employes to back up to and with bad



The three sleepers of the 1916 Orton train are shown in this photo. Babe Woodcock Collection.

at or near Ortonville west of Des Moines, Iowa. With the exception of some time that he might have spent with his brother Miles shows in the 1880's and 90's during the depression period and before the Rail Roads reached Iowa. Arzy Orton lived through three wars and twenty five years of depression. A very religious man, he always gave the people a good clean show for their money and left a good high class circus family to carry on.

Following the death of Arzy Orton the oldest son Criley took over the management of the show. During the 1920's times were very good and all traveling shows did a very satisfactory business. The Orton Circus continued their established territory through the west. About 1923 they bought the elephant Jennie Lockhart from Wm. P. Hall. This elephant had quite a history having been shipped over from Germany



with a troupe of trained elephants by a man named Lockhart . . . and having spent several years in the Ringling herd.

Page 4, Sept.-Oct. 1968 Bandwagon has quite a history on these elephants.

After Criley Orton took over the management of the circus they continued playing their established territory through the West during the 1920's. The Circus World Museum at Baraboo, Wisconsin furnished us with the 1927 route of the circus complete. We herewith publish three summer months. It will show the reader what wagon show troupings in the west was like. The Orton Brothers Circus opened the 1927 season at Grimes, Iowa April 30th. After playing 27 stands in northwest Iowa during May they left the state at Sargents Bluff June 1st, moved across the Missouri River to So. Sioux City, Nebraska for June 2nd and headed for the cattle country in the Sand Hills of Nebraska for June and July which the following route will show. They played everything from a population of forty people to the largest of 7845.

The population of the towns in the following list were taken from Rand & McNally's maps. Also the mileage between the stands which in some places were not given and is the approximate mileage which is very close. If the reader will note earlier in the story Mrs. Woodcock told how when she was a small girl they had to engage a guide in some places to take them to the next stand. Perhaps by 1927 much change had taken place with better roads and at least better marked Highway Signs.

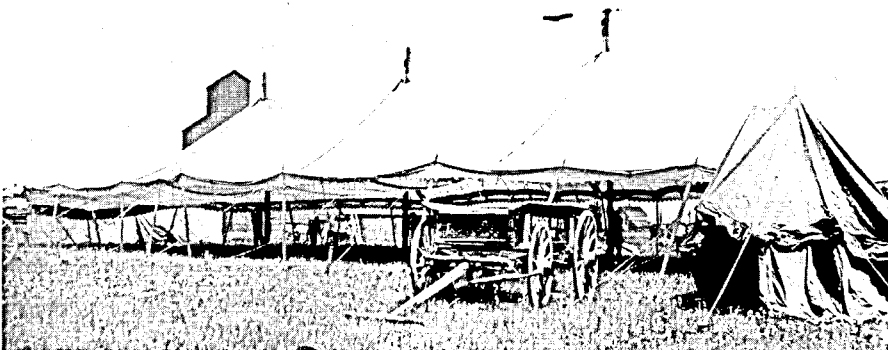
The pole wagon of the mud show that traveled in the late 1920s is shown in the photo taken in 1926. Babe Woodcock Collection.

The following routes also shows the month of August in the range country of South Dakota east of the Bad Lands and along the Missouri River.

Nebraska Cattle Country

June 1927	City	Population	Miles
2	So. Sioux City		
3	Homer	320	19
4	Wakefield	1016	18
5	SUNDAY		
6	Windside	416	15
7	Hopkins	178	11
8	Battle Creek	587	7
9	Medow Grove	430	9
10	Tilden	917	5
11	Oak Dale	397	7
12	SUNDAY		
13	Elgen	881	9
14	Petersburg	400	10
15	Albin	1982	13
16	Cedar Rapids	512	17
17	Primrose	117	18
18	Spaulding	683	17
19	SUNDAY		
20	Ericson	157	25
21	Burwell	1425	24
22	Taylor	280	13
23	Sargent	876	8
24	Comstock	235	15
25	Arcadia	446	24
26	SUNDAY		
27	Litchfield	264	23

The big top of the 1926 Orton Bros. Show going up in a North Dakota town is shown here. The wagons looked much like farm wagons. Joe Fleming Collection.



28	Mason City	277	9
29	Ansley	714	7
30	Berwyn	104	7

Nebraska Cattle Country

July			
1	Broken Bow	3482	27
2	Anselmo	269	20
3	SUNDAY		
4	Gandy	41	40
5	Arnold	844	17
6	Enroute		
7	Dunning	210	40
8	Halsey	111	10
9	Theftord	303	13
10	SUNDAY		
11	Mullen	811	26



Criley Orton is shown with the famous Orton elephant "Jennie Lockhart". Jennie was one of the group of elephants that came from England in 1895 to join the Ringling show. Jennie was the one and only elephant owned by the Ortons for a number of years. Two little punks were later added, who were mothered solicitously by Jennie. She wore leather shoes on the concrete pavements, but preferred to travel barefoot on ordinary roads as she went from town to town. At the age of 95 Jennie died in Union City, Iowa, two days before Christmas in 1928. Photo by Joe Fleming.

12	Whitman	none	25
13	Hyannis	373	12
14	Ashby	none	9
15	Bingham	none	9
16	Lakeside	none	18
17	SUNDAY		
18	Alliance	7845	22
19	Henningford	904	18
20	Marsland	39	20
21	Crawford	1588	18
22	Whitney	98	11
23	Chardran	5079	11
24	SUNDAY		
25	Hay Springs	823	24
26	Rushville	1228	15
27	Gordon	2223	16
28	Merriman	285	30
29	Eli	none	none
30	Cody	230	11
31	SUNDAY		

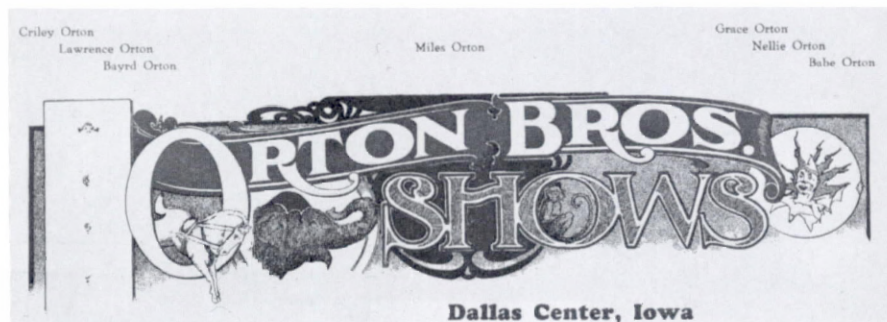
South Dakota Cattle Country

August			
1	St. Francis	42	25
2	Rosebud	none	8
3	Mission	611	12
4	Okreek	none	15
5	Wood	267	14
6	White River	683	17
7	SUNDAY		
8	Murdo	783	23
9	Draper	215	9
10	Vivian	none	13
11	Presho	881	11
12	Kennebec	327	10
13	Reliance	201	13
14	SUNDAY		
15	Pukwana	247	24
16	Vega	none	10
17	Gann Valley	none	8
18	Miller	2081	24
19	Reehits	188	10
20	Highmore	1078	11
21	SUNDAY		
22	Harrold	767	15
23	Blunt	532	13
24	Onida	843	17
25	Agar	139	8
26	Lebanon	198	39
27	Hoven	568	12
28	SUNDAY		
29	Bowdle	673	19
30	Java	406	15
31	Mound City	144	27



Sadie "Babe" Orton (Woodcock) is shown as a young girl inside the Orton Big Top. The child is not William "Buckles" Woodcock, Jr. Photo from Nellie Orton Pough by way of the Circus World Museum.

After finishing up the month of August in the Range Country of South Dakota the show headed east through the farming country to the Red River Valley. Many small towns played with very good results in the three months in the range country. Perhaps a third or more towns were far from any railroad. I once met a man in Southern Nebraska that was operating a small dramatic show under canvas. He had just come down from the north out of the Range Country. I asked him how



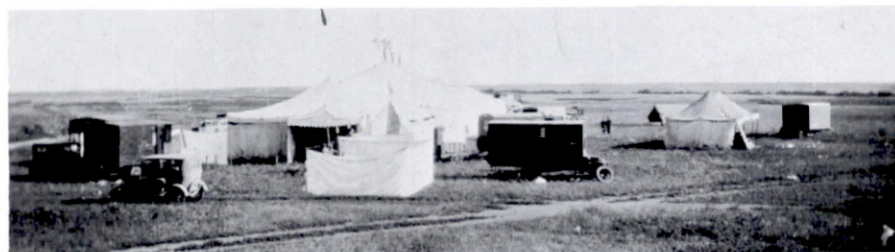
This letterhead was used by the Ortons in the late 1920s when it was managed by Criley Orton. Babe Woodcock Collection.

business was up there. He said, "Good". I had an open night where I was not billed and just stopped at a wide place in the road. All there was up there was a store and Blacksmith Shop. I got \$80.00 and kept it all. That is more than I would have had if I played Grand Island after I paid all the bills.

I was once billing a Theatrical Show in a western town, about sixty years ago before automobiles were common. The days were too short for an agent to get his work done in day light. I was billing the town by the light of a lantern. The Opera House manager was holding the light for me while I posted the bills. About three o'clock in the morning when we were finishing our billing the manager said, "Let's go down to the hall and post some bills. There is a dance going on." We went down and found one of the finest dressed crowds, the men were in black ties, evening suits and patent leather shoes which were the vogue then. The ladies were in evening gowns and fine jewelry to match. It was a crowd that would equal Broadway anywhere. I said, "Where did that bunch of cow pokes get those suits." He laughed and said "Don't worry, those cow pokes have dollars where we don't have dimes. There are a lot of those men and women here tonight that rode horseback for forty miles to be here and carried their evening clothes in their saddle bag."

After playing a couple more stands in South Dakota the circus played twelve stands in North Dakota entering Minnesota at Dumont September 19th in the Red River Valley. They moved south through the farming country of

The entire Orton show is pictured in the lot view taken in 1926. Babe Woodcock Collection.



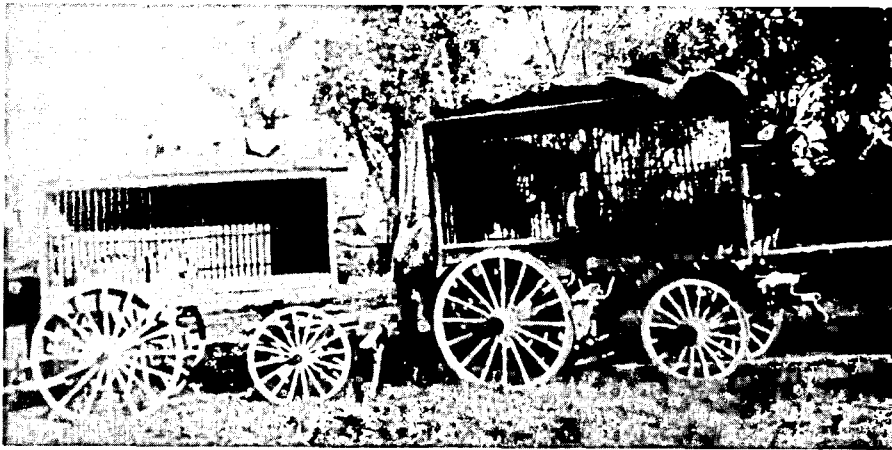
Western Minnesota for twenty stands and entered Iowa at Milford October 14th. They played twelve stands in northwest Iowa closing the season at Boxholm October 3rd, after playing twenty five weeks, and one hundred fifty stands with none marked lost. The above route is an average season for the wagon show. They went into winter quarters at Dallas Center, Iowa.

Following the return of the circus into Winter Quarters in 1927, Wm. H. Woodcock delivered two elephants to the circus. Their names were Elsie and Sadie. This made three elephants in the Orton herd.

The next spring, 1928, the show opened as usual with seven Ford trucks, five horse drawn baggage wagons, five animal cages. The big top 70 x 130, menagerie tent 40 x 60, dressing tent 9 x 14, cook tent 12 x 20, 31 horses and ponies, one ostrich and three elephants, also living trucks for the personnel.

The show moved north and west over the usual territory into western Nebraska then on down into the Platte River Valley of Nebraska. One day that spring I was posting paper for our Theatre show in Sidney, Nebraska when the Orton Brothers advance truck drove up. The driver said pardener what is the reader here. I said we play a week stand and I get by with a dramatic show for \$30.00 but I suppose that the city will want a lot more license for a circus, he said "Well Orton's are not looking for any big fancy license. Guess I will go back to Gurley and bill that. That will have more clear when they get through there."

Gurley was a small place of about 250 people. I thought then that agent was right. I remember once hearing a story about Ben Wallace just after he bought the Carl Hegenbeck Trained animal show. He was calling on Al. G. Barnes when he had his show on the Parker Carnival Co. in Omaha, Barnes



said Ben I wish I had your show, Wallace replied I wish I had your Nut . . . So it is not always what you get, it is what you have left over. Later on that spring I was up north and met the Orton Circus going into town I met Mrs. Orton and one of her daughters and had a talk with them. Later on up the hill I met the seven Ford trucks which were plenty hot after climbing the heavy grade also the horse drawn baggage wagons, Elephants and Cages. After playing on down into the Platte River valley they moved east and south during the summer into Oklahoma. When they arrived at Union City, Oklahoma in the fall the Old Elephant Jennie Lockhart became ill and had to stop. The weather was quite cool and the elephant was led into a barn. Stoves were set up to keep her reasonably comfortable. Two days before Christmas Old Jennie died, 95 years old and 3½ tons, she was buried there. The Circus went into winter quarters there.

The next spring 1929 the show moved north for the summer. In 1929 Criley Orton the manager of the show died, of course that did cause some changes but it being a family show the Orton people just banded together and kept the show moving. They played their usual territory. The fall of 1929 we had the stock market crash.

By fall the Circus was in Southern Iowa and closed the season at Sharidan, Missouri, October 14th moving home into winter quarters with offices at

These two cages were used on the Orton show in 1915, the year before their rail venture. Photo from Nellie Orton Poush, by way of Circus World Museum.

Dallas Center, Iowa. The season of 1930 was played through the established territory. In 1931 while the Circus was in Colorado Mother Sarah B. Orton became ill on the show and was placed in the hospital at Colorado Springs. She passed away there on October 5th that fall at the age of seventy one, after upwards of fifty years toil with the Orton Circus. Mrs. Orton was born in 1860 and raised on an adjoining farm at Ortonville, Iowa, the winter quarters on the circus. She was seven years old when in 1867 the Orton Circus made their famous trip south starting at Adel and south into Texas, when Arzy then a boy was playing in the girls' band.

In later years when their marriage was imminent Arzy built an eight room brick house on the adjoining property. In 1887 they set up house keeping.

Mother Sarah Orton the youngest of twelve children and mother of eight born there and grandmother of twenty two grandchildren. She was a long time member of the Christian Church. Mrs. Orton had spent her entire married life from 1887 to 1931 with the family Circus. She had the right to her

This billboard was used to advertise a date during the 1916 season of the mud show. Babe Woodcock Collection.



title, but it was conferred on the cheerful hard working white haired Septuagenarian by thousands of nontrouping families who annually greeted her as she made change in the Orton ticket wagon.

The next season was 1932 and an election year, times had been getting worse since the stock market crash in 1929. The circus went west in the spring but turned back east through Kansas as a part of the route here will show, St. Francis Kansas, June 27 & 28, Rexford Kansas July 4th & 5th, Norton Kansas July 11th & 12th. By the time fall came the Orton's agreed to disband and each go their own way. It was perhaps a hard thing for that Orton Family Show to do but they were not alone with such decisions.

By 1932 the price of farm products had hit a new low. Corn on the farm was down to 10c per bushel and hogs, live weight, 3c per pound. All other products north and south including the price of labor were at the lowest level since the depression of the 1880 and 1890's. These prices did not help the sale of circus tickets.

About 1933 the Federal Government set the price of corn at 45c per bushel which brought the price of livestock out of balance with feed grains. But after that calamity was over and the government called in the gold and inflated the currency farm prices did improve.

Had the Orton people kept going for one more year, no doubt, the Family Show would be on the road today — 1969. With all these young people, twenty two of them in the Fourth Generation, all schooled in the circus from childhood. By now the Fifth Generation could be on the circus lot, with Miles Orton the last of the brothers still living and the three girls Grace, Nellie and Babe they could have been the guiding hand. No doubt, some of the young people might leave for other vocations but there would still be enough left for their own Band, Performers, truck drivers, stake drivers and any other help they might need. Too, the price of labor would be no object. They could be playing the same old territory with good roads everywhere.

Miles Orton still lives in Ortonville, Iowa and the three girls have comfortable homes elsewhere.

BANDWAGON CHANGES

This issue of the Bandwagon may look a bit different to many readers. It is because we have gone to a new printer, who offers many new styles of type.

The page layout is changed a little also, with slightly wider columns, which make the photos larger.

It is the Editor's aim that the magazine be as readable and interesting as possible.

The Circus in Wartime

Dr. Robert J. Loeffler

Circuses have played an important role during the various wars in the history of the United States. In doing some research in this area I came across some interesting facts. It is my feeling that circus fans will be interested in some of the ways in which the circus has been involved in war matters.

Therefore, during World War I many troop trains moved across the country and in addition war supplies often clogged many railroad freight terminals. Oftentimes, circus and carnival trains were either shunted onto a siding or were refused movement by the various railroad companies because of the necessity for the movement of troops and equipment. This situation became serious for the railroad circus. In April, 1918, the circus men took action to correct the dilemma in which they found themselves. The *Billboard* carried the story:

"The big circus interests of America have had a conference extending over six days in this city (New York), which was brought to an amicable and successful conclusion tonight. The object of the conference was an endeavor to get together and help the railroads to handle the long circus trains in congested territory. It was clear to all concerned that unless the circus folks could extend some really helpful suggestions and advice to the regional directors that the latter would be compelled to issue a mandatory order refusing circus business altogether.

"With sidings filled to overflowing, terminals congested and motive power at the lowest ebb it has been in years, no one road could contemplate two big shows on its lines at one time for instance. And so the showfolk got together and reached an agreement.

"A plan was outlined and Messrs. C. C. Wilson and Edward Arlington left for Washington this evening to present it to Director-General McAdoo.

"It is a clever arrangement, and its sponsors are confident that it solves the problem, and will be accepted by the powers to be.

"Edward Ballard, of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Shows, was plainly elated when interviewed by a *Billboard* representative and stated that he was leaving tonight for West Baden (Indiana) perfectly easy in mind and assured that a difficult situation had been straightened out.

"The troubles dealt with were foreseen months ago, and several attempts to agree on plans that might remedy matters were discussed at meetings held from time to time, but nothing definite

mentioned until the showmen realized that they were up against a dead, cold, hard fact and that they must fish or cut bait and do one or the other with alacrity.

"With scarcely a week to spare, they finally realized the gravity of the situation and the necessity of haste and then they worked fast and to a great purpose."

The plan worked out provided that the circus and carnival companies were to arrange in advance with the numerous railroad systems for the movement of their trains. An example of such an arrangement is illustrated when Edward M. Ballard, announced plans for his Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus to "invade" the East Coast. Ballard joined Edward Arlington in Washington to work out a contract and obtain the approval of Director-General of the Railroads, Mr. McAdoo, whereby the New York Central System agreed to move Ballard's circus trains. Likewise, a similar contract was arranged with the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad for the movement of Hagenbeck-Wallace and other circus trains. The contract agreements were usually formulated during the winter months prior to spring openings of the circuses.

"Probably the first instance this season (1918) of a railroad taking advantage of the war clause in its con-

In 1917 the Red Cross Women Performers Unit was organized on the Barnum & Bailey Circus. They are shown here in a group, why a midgel in the show's baseball team uniform in with the group is unknown. Burl Wilson Collection.



tract with a circus by which circus movements are deferred to permit the movement of troop trains or war supplies occurred last week when the P.R.R. on 24-hour notice refused to haul the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus from Aurora, Illinois, where the circus played Saturday, August 17, to Hammond, Indiana, where the circus was billed to exhibit the following Monday, and which date it was forced to cancel. At that time it looked as though the circus would lose the entire week of the 19th, as several of the runs were on the Pennsylvania. In that event the show would have been compelled to move direct from Aurora to this city where it is showing today. Fortunately, however, the Pennsylvania consented to receive the show Tuesday, and moved it to Logansport, but too late for either a parade or afternoon performance, while the night business was hurt by a threatening storm. This was the second time this season the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus cancelled Hammond, the first showing being scheduled for the day on which one section of the circus was wrecked near Gary, Indiana."

Generally, the relationship between government and circus during the period of European hostilities was exceedingly cordial and friendly and few incidents of the above nature occurred.

To illustrate the attitude of the government and Mr. McAdoo, I quote from the April 27, 1918 issue of *The Billboard*.

"During the past winter a prominent circus man, wishing to learn the attitude of the Government before preparing his circus for this season, went to Mr. McAdoo and told him if it was the wish of the Government that circuses stay off the road he would gladly leave his show in winter quarters.

"Mr. McAdoo's answer was that it certainly was not the wish of the Government that shows stay off the road,



Along with other war time problems the Ringling Barnum show suffered a serious menagerie fire on August 4, 1942, in Cleveland, Ohio. Burt Wilson Collection.

that it was not the Government's intention to interfere with any legitimate business further than the imperative needs of the conduct of the war made necessary, and that it was the duty of the showmen to take out his attraction at this time when the people should have and need amusement . . . and right now the office of the Director-General of Railroads is cooperating with the showmen in every way possible to enable them to move their attractions over the road."

During World War II the Office of Defense Transportation had to again take a close look at the operation of circuses and carnivals that moved by railroads because of the necessity of allowing rapid movement of troops and war supplies to various points through these United States.

In October of 1942, the Office of Defense Transportation was furnished with a list of show companies that subscribed to the freight car interchange rules agreement. Apparently, Ringling-Barnum were asked to supply the list but the accompanying letter explains their position in this matter.

October 25, 1942

Mr. V. R. Hawthorne:

Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey have no knowledge of equipment owned or operated by other show companies, but for your ready reference, the following are listed subscribers to the freight car interchange rules agreement:

Barlow Brothers Shows
Beckman & Gerety's Worlds Best Shows
Bernaidi Greater Shows, Inc.
Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus, Inc.
Dodson's World's Fair Shows, Inc.
Dufour Shows, Lew
Ferari Shows, Col. Francis

Francis Shows, John
Goodman Wender Show, Inc.
Hames Shows, Bill, Inc.
Hennie Bros. Show, Inc.
Isler Greater Shows
Jones, Johnny J. Expeditions
Kalls' United Shows
Leggette Shows, C. R.
Levitt-Brown-Huggins Combined Shows
Lewis Shows, Inc., Art
McClellan Shows, J. T.
McCoys Real Wild West-Col. Tim
Main Circus, Walter L.
Miller Bros. Shows
Palmer Brothers Circus
Patterson's Trained Wild Animal Circus
Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows
Royal American Shows, Inc.
Sanidge Amusement Company
State Fair Shows
Strates Shows Corporation
Wolfe Shows, T. A.
World Of Mirth Shows, Inc.

Wortham's World's Best Shows, C. A.

In December, 1942, the Office of Defense Transportation requested a list of the passenger equipment operated by the Ringling-Barnum Circus. The memorandum reveals the following detailed, but as noted, incomplete data.

December 16, 1942

File: 613-0

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. McCarthy

Attached is list showing incomplete data with regard to the passenger equipment now being operated for the account of Ringling Brothers Circus.

When it has been determined what policy will be pursued with regard to circuses in 1943, it might be well to have these cars inspected in order to determine whether or not their use could be justified in moving of agriculture workers.

H.R.S.

HRS: gr



The most serious "Act of God" to ever affect the Ringling Barnum Circus was the big top fire in Hartford, Conn. on July 6, 1944. Burt Wilson Collection.

SLEEPING CAR EQUIPMENT

Car No.	Named	Cond- tion	Type of Brakes	Class of Service	Delco Unit	Remarks
—	Jomar	Good	UC	Official	Yes	All Steel Official car with observation end, and air conditioned.
						Delco lighting arrangement but not equipped for heating.
45	Illinois	Fair	UC	Sleeper	—	Six-wheel equalized
70	Connecticut	"	UC	"	—	truck with wooden
71	Indiana	"	L2	"	—	truck frames—36"
72	Minnesota	"	UC	"	—	steel wheels. All
73	Michigan	"	UC	"	—	cast iron pedestals
76	Wisconsin	"	UC	"	—	rather well worn.
77	Nebraska	"	UC	"	—	
78	Maryland	"	UC	"	—	Wooden underframe
79	Alabama	"	UC	"	Yes	with steel center
81	Louisville	"	P2	"	Yes	sill reinforcement
82	Des Moines	"	UC	Rooms	—	and for body truss
83	St. Louis	"	P2	"	—	rods.
85	New York	"	UC	Sleeper	—	Long shank cou-
86	Worcester	"	UC	Room	—	plers.
*87	Sarasota	"	P2	Room	—	Woodslides. Canvas
89	Seattle	"	UC	"	—	roof.
90	Washington	"	UC	Sleeper	—	Improvised steel.
91	San Antonio	"	UC	"	—	Vestibule — one
94	Atlanta	"	UC	"	Yes	exit.
#95	New Orleans	"	UC	"	—	Overhead water
96	Portland	"	P2	Room	—	tanks.
						Not equipped with any type of heating facilities or train signal arrangement.
						Wired for Delco lighting system.
						Journal boxes and air brakes in date.
						Sleepers average from 45 to 60 bunks.

* Steel plated sides
Steel truck frames

Total 22 cars

Furthermore, an additional memorandum was issued by V. V. Boatner and I quote it as follows:

OFFICE OF
DEFENSE TRANSPORTATION
January 16, 1943

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. H. F. McCarthy
FROM: V. V. Boatner

From the listing below you will note that Ringling Brothers have 88 cars, all of which no doubt could

be utilized in some railroad service:

70 ft. flats — 80,000 capacity	13
70 ft. flats — 100,000 capacity	40
70 ft. stock — 100,000 capacity	13
Sleeping cars — all steel	
45 to 60 bunks each	22
	—
Total	88

V. V. B.

Mr. V. V. Boatner filed a report on the equipment operated by the Ringling-Barnum Circus with Mr. Joseph B. Eastman, Director of the Office of Defense Transportation. Mr. Boatner's letter reads as follows:

January 28, 1943

To: Mr. Eastman

From: V. V. Boatner

An inspection has been made of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey railroad equipment, which consists of twenty-two sleeping cars, fifty-two 70-foot flat cars, and thirteen 70-foot stock cars.

owners also handled with the War Production Board without result.

Representatives of the Association of American Railroads and of my Mechanical Section are today inspecting the twenty-five cars of Cole Brothers Circus at the State Fair Grounds in Louisville, Kentucky. It is probable that equipment will prove to be about the same as Ringling Brothers'.

In the light of the above facts and the inability to utilize this equipment to any advantage other than for the purpose it now serves, it is my conclusion that Ringling Brothers Circus be permitted to move from its winter quarters to as far east as Boston and hence to a limited number of points on and east of the Mississippi River, and work its way back to Florida at the close of the season. Likewise, that the Cole Brothers Circus be permitted to operate in a similar manner. Both operations, of course, should be subject to delays

Boatner concludes that railroad equipment owned by the circuses can be efficiently and safely used for no other purpose.

Inasmuch as the carnival companies, show companies, and a majority of the circuses utilize highway transportation, our policy is determined by the fact that these companies may continue to move until their tires wear out. I understand from Mr. Rogers that other than ineligibility for new tires, no restrictions will be placed upon the highway shows.

There are only two circuses that require special train service — Ringling Brothers and Cole Brothers. The remainder of the circuses, show companies, carnival companies, etc., use their own baggage cars in some cases and railroad owned baggage cars in others.

I do not believe that we should discriminate and, therefore, recommend that we issue a general permit which will allow the railroad companies to handle Cole Brothers and Ringling Brothers on a special train. This permit should be limited by clauses which will insure that the underlying contracts for transportation specifically permit the railroad to change and alter schedules covering the movement of the circus train so that there will be no interference with any other freight or passenger operation. Furthermore, the itinerary of the special train should be approved in advance by the Office of Defense Transportation.

I am sending copy of this recommendation to Mr. Putney so that he may advise you regarding the desirability of a public announcement of policy and as suggesting that he prepare a release for your approval. Mr. Hayes informs me that Ringling Brothers has not yet made inquiry this year.

We must be prepared to justify our decision, especially insofar as we permit special train operation. The factual grounds for justification are:

1. The small amount of transportation involved.
2. The desirability of taking entertainment to the people.

As soon as we have your approval, I would like to release a telegram to be signed by you to Ringling Brothers and Cole Brothers, reading as follows:

"ODT will issue general permit to railroads covering operation of special circus trains with proviso that you submit itinerary to ODT for approval and that your contracts with railroads will stipulate that circus movements are to be subject to delay and interruption account giving all freight and passenger trains preference and that there will be no penalty for delay or disruption to schedules."

Joseph B. Eastman."



The sleeping cars are of wooden-underframe construction, not suitable for main-line service nor adaptable to conversion.

The flat cars are of steel construction and in rather good condition, but their length restricts the uses to which the cars could be put in ordinary service; that is, the question of clearances on curves and the possibility of buckling under load in long, heavy freight trains must be considered. Their length, likewise, prevents their use in intra-plant industrial service where curvatures are usually rather extreme.

The stock cars are subject to somewhat the same limitation, and there is also the increased hazard of injury to livestock which might be loaded in such cars, because of the extreme length.

The Association of American Railroads has developed that the Army is not interested in the cars and that the

The Al G. Barnes ticket wagon was carried on Ringling Barnum in 1943 and was used as a downtown ticket sales, in connection with the Treasury Department's War Bond Drive. The wagon is shown in Times Square, in New York, in March of 1943. Bob Good Photo.

and restrictions, where necessary, to accommodate military or other important traffic.

CC: Mr. McCarthy
Mr. Harstad V. V. B.
Mr. Castle
Col. J. M. Johnson

In turn, H. F. McCarthy, Director of the Division of Traffic Movement, wrote the following memorandum to Mr. Eastman:

January 30, 1943

File: 613-0

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. Eastman

The attached memorandum from Mr.

H. F. McCarthy, Director
Division of Traffic Movement
HFM:MP

cc to Messrs. Boatner
Rogers
Hayes
Putney

All of these negotiations finally led to the issuance of the following statement, in February, 1943, by Joseph B. Eastman of the ODT.

"Mr. Eastman's statement included the announcement that circuses and carnivals would be permitted to operate during the coming season, if they were willing to submit to certain restrictions and take certain chances. A survey of railroad cars owned by the Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey Circus disclosed, Mr. Eastman said, that they were not suitable for other service or adaptable to conversion.

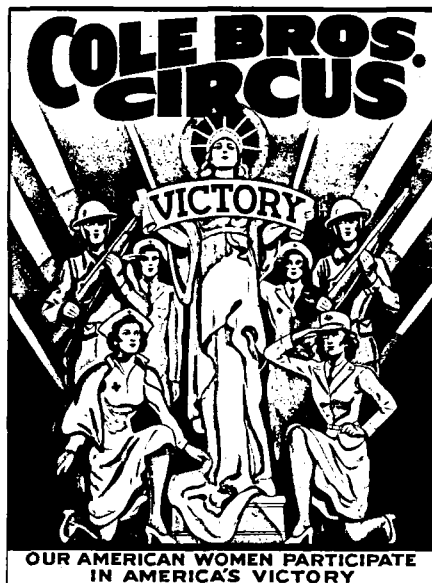
"Circuses moving by rail must have their itineraries approved by ODT. All freight and passenger train movements will have preference over circus train movements. Mr. Eastman said circuses and carnivals moving over the highway must take the chance involved in the fact that they are ineligible for tires. He warned that holding of sporting and other recreational events involved risks with respect to attendance, in view of present and possible future restrictions on transportation. He said that it would be better, from a transportation standpoint, if the Kentucky Derby were not run this year.

"Mr. Eastman urged those responsible for determining whether or not state and county fairs should be held to give thought to restrictions imposed by gasoline rationing on use of motor vehicles, and to the possibility that further restrictions might become necessary."

Text of Mr. Eastman's statement follows:

"The Office of Defense Transportation has received many inquiries in regard to its attitude with respect to sporting and recreational events. It has

For the 1944 and 1945 seasons Bud Anderson added "American Victory" to the title of his circus. The ticket wagon is shown in this 1944 view. Pfening Collection.



The closing spec of Cole Bros. Circus, in 1944, was "Old Glory". This special 1/2 sheet litho was used to advertise the spec. Pfening Collection.

no direct authority over such matters. It cannot prohibit the operation of race tracks, fairs, baseball parks, and the like. However, it has authority over transportation, and this authority could be exercised in such a way as to affect sports and recreation seriously.

"The general attitude of the Federal Government toward sports and recreation was stated by the President on March 10, 1942, as follows:

"It is, of course, obvious that the war effort is the primary task of everybody in the nation. All other activities must be considered secondary. At the same time it has been proved beyond doubt that human beings cannot sustain continued and prolonged work for very long, without obtaining a proper balance between work on the one hand and vacation and recreation on the other. Such recreation may come by participation in, or attendance at, various sports, motion pictures, music, the drama, picnics, et cetera. All of them have a necessary and beneficial part in promoting an over-all efficiency by re-

lieving the strains of war and work.

"The actual occurrence of very large gatherings, of course, must depend on local safety conditions of the moment.

"Within reasonable limits, I believe that the war effort will not be hampered but actually improved by sensible participation in healthy recreational pursuits. It must be borne in mind, however, that 'recreation as usual' is just as bad as 'business as usual.' Recreation under present conditions can be undertaken solely with the purpose of building up body and mind and with the chief thought that this will help win the war."

"Plainly, the ODT should not, through its authority over transportation, exercise any indirect control over sports and recreation which is inconsistent with this statement by the President. I do not interpret that statement, however, that the best interests of transportation, from the standpoint of war effort, should be sacrificed to protect 'recreation as usual.'

"In connection with sports and recreation, transportation is used chiefly to move the people who attend sporting events, but to some extent, also, to move those who are direct participants, and their property. The present controls (for conservation purposes) on transportation which affect such movements are:

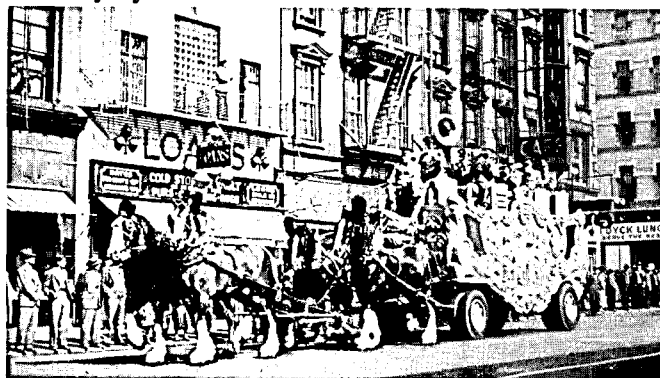
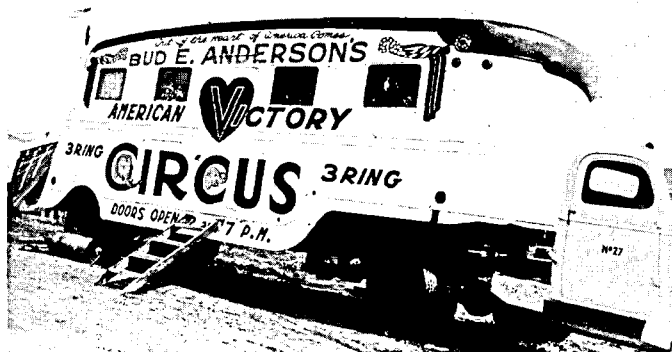
"1. The railroads are prohibited from operating, in passenger service, special trains, special extra sections of regular trains, or special cars, without permit from the ODT. No permits have been given to accommodate attendance at sporting events.

"2. Common carrier bus lines are prohibited from operating intercity service for the primary purpose of supplying transportation to places of amusement or entertainment, including sporting or recreational events.

"3. The operation of chartered buses to such events has been prohibited.

"4. Motor trucks and buses used in

The first circus parade to be given in New York in twenty-five years took place on April 9, 1945. Ringling Barnum paraded to open the 7th War Loan Drive. The Five Graces bandwagon is shown with a four horse hitch. Bob Good Photo.



private or contract operation for the hauling of carnivals or race horses, or for other like purposes, are now ineligible for new tires or tubes of any kind.

"5. The operation of private automobiles is limited by the nation-wide rationing of gasoline. In Eastern seaboard territory, there is, because of the gasoline shortage, a special prohibition against the use of these cars for pleasure purposes. The ODT has asked the public in this territory to refrain from using taxicabs for such purposes.

"In addition to these positive controls, the ODT has been promoting a campaign to induce the public to refrain voluntarily from unnecessary intercity travel by railroad or bus. Organized baseball has responded by eliminating southern and western training camps and arranging schedules of games so as to reduce the travel of the teams as far as practicable.

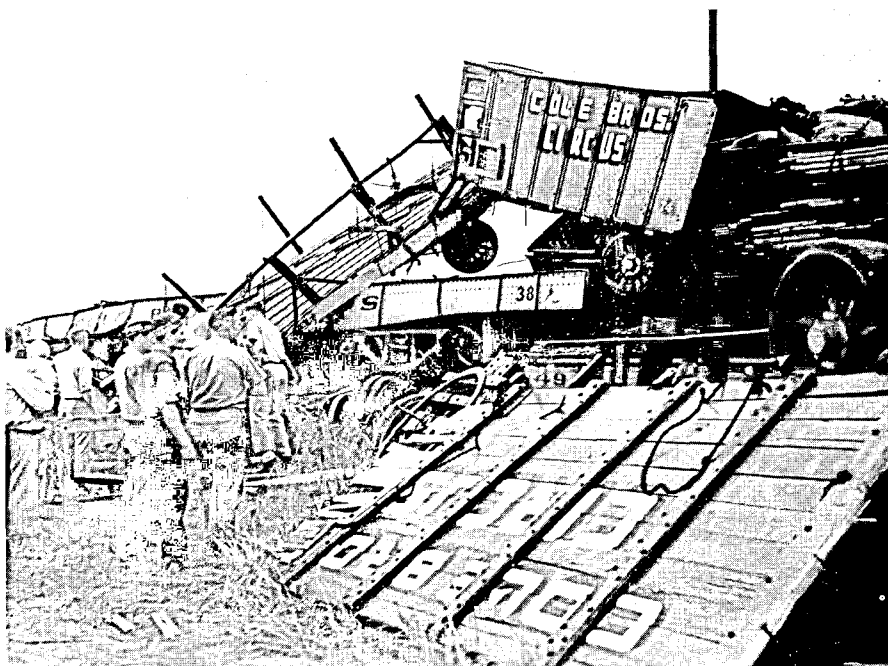
"The position of the ODT with respect to specific sports or recreational events may be stated as follows:

"Circuses and Carnivals. The two largest circuses travel by railroad in special trains made up of cars which they own. A thorough survey has been made of the cars used by the Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey Circus, consisting of 22 sleeping cars, 52 70-foot flatcars, and 13 70-foot stock cars. The sleeping cars are of wooden-underframe construction, not suitable for main-line service in regular trains nor adaptable to conversion. The length of the flat and stock cars, which is abnormal, makes them unsuited for general use in ordinary freight service. Neither the Association of American Railroads nor the Army is interested in using these cars for other than their present purpose. The other circus, Cole Brothers, has only 25 cars, of similar type.

"The smaller circuses and carnivals travel, sometimes by regular passenger trains, using baggage cars (some of which they own) for their equipment; and sometimes by freight train, using their own cars; but more often by motor vehicles (most of which they own), the latter now being ineligible for tires.

"Those who attend circuses and carnivals move, according to the location, in the main by city rapid transit and street railway lines, buses, taxicabs, and private automobiles.

"In the circumstances, the ODT will issue a general permit to railroads allowing operation of special circus trains made up of the circus-owned cars, provided the circuses concerned submit their itineraries in advance to the ODT for approval and agree to schedule their performances so that travel to and from by the public will be in non-peak hours, and provided that their contracts with the railroads stipulate that circus movements are to be subject to delay and interruption resulting from the giving of preference to all freight and



On July 22, 1945 the Cole Bros. Circus suffered a train wreck enroute from St. Cloud to Brainerd, Minn. Two flats and several baggage wagons were demolished. The show was off the road for one week to rebuild. Plening Collection.

passenger trains or from lack of available motive power, and that there will be no penalty for delay or interruption of schedules.

"If the smaller circuses and carnivals decide to operate, they must be prepared to take the chance involved in their present ineligibility for tires and the further chance that restrictions or regulations may become necessary which will affect their use of regular train service or impose additional limitations on the use of the motor vehicles.

"All of the circuses and carnivals must take the chance involved in the fact that the attending public will not have the benefit of special train or bus service and that travel by automobile is restricted by gasoline rationing, and the further fact that still other restrictions on rubber-borne transportation may become necessary, including taxicab service."

Finally, on May 24, 1944, Mr. Eastman released this statement in respect to circus and carnival performers who use trucks to transport property in connection with traveling shows:

"Carnival and circus performers and others who use trucks to transport property in connection with traveling shows will be required to apply, not later than June 15, for mileage and motor fuel allotments for their operations for the calendar quarter beginning July 1, 1944, the Office of Defense Transportation announced today

"Applications for Certificates of War Necessity should be made to the nearest ODT district office in the area in which the performers are appearing. The operators should furnish the ODT district managers with an itinerary showing the places they are scheduled to appear during the three-month period; the mileage they will operate their trucks between the various places; the mileage, if any, they will operate within each place; and the motor fuel that will be required to perform this operation.

"The ODT will issue a special type of Certificate of War Necessity which will certify the allotments determined by the district manager to be necessary to conduct the operation over the itinerary submitted. By arrangement with the OPA, these special certificates may be presented to any OPA War Price and Rationing Board, which will issue the motor fuel allotment called for on the certificate, the ODT explained.

"By amendment to its General Orders, the ODT prohibits truck operators, without prior ODT approval, from inaugurating or extending motor carrier service in a territory or over routes not served by such persons as motor carriers on or before October 25, 1943.

"Persons who have not operated trucks in connection with traveling shows in the past should not ask for approval to institute new operations at this time, the ODT said. Persons who have engaged in such truck operations in the past should confine them this season, insofar as possible, to the routes and territories served by them during the 1943 season, and their total allotments of mileage and motor fuel for the 1944 season should not exceed in any substantial degree the allotments granted to them for 1943."



Harold Dunn Collection.

THE LIVING STATUES

A classic act that appeared with all of the large circuses during the "golden age" of the big top was the living statue presentation.

It was a very elaborate affair requiring many props, and a large number of people. Large circular or square curtains were used to shield the participants from the audiences' view while they were taking their places for each "scene." The curtains were either dropped to the ground or pulled high in the big top during the display of each scene.

The seasons of the year were a must for each routine, as was a patriotic scene with Uncle Sam. Often one scene would show the group as Indians with flowing white head-dresses. Other poses would duplicate various statue groupings.

To simulate marble tight fitting white leotards were worn fully covering the bodies of the women. In the late 1890s and early 1900s this type of exposure was quite daring and attracted ohs and ahs from the gentlemen in the audience. Clown white makeup was used to cover the faces and hands, with wooly white wigs on each head. The men used the makeup but usually appeared in all white costumes, like the sailor suits in the photo, and on Uncle Sam. All props such as horns and rifles were painted with whitewash.

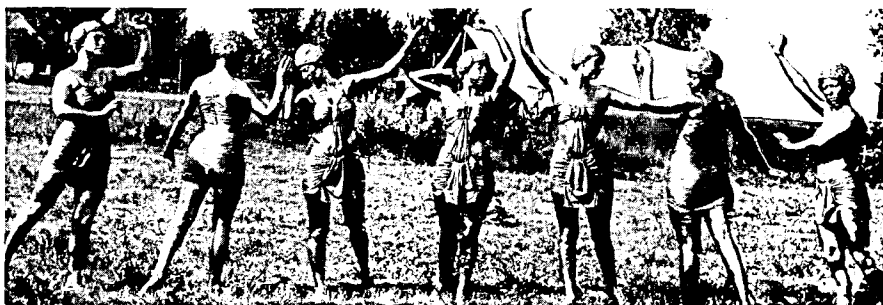
A few of the larger shows began in the 1910s to present a few people with their bodies covered with gold paint. One of the

first to use gold body paint was Ernest Brengk, who directed the "posing" acts on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1914, 15 and 16. Mr. Brengk's attire was very brief, covering only his head and a small part of his middle section. Seven women appearing as part of his group wore two piece outfits that were brief for that period. Mr. Brengk also used a horse painted gold. Later his daughter Belladonna Brengk presented a group known as the Brengks Golden Models, using a gold painted horse with gold prop wings.

The Ringling Barnum Circus had used a statue act each season since the combination in 1919. To commemorate their golden Jubilee in 1933 the show imported the Marcellus Golden Models from Europe. This group was headed by Leo Spurgat. Mr. Spurgat produced a very large display appearing in all five rings and stages for the 1933 performance. Additional girls were recruited from the show personnel to present a large number of people in the display. For the opening spec Modoc, the elephant was painted gold and carried a "golden girl."

Leo Spurgat and the statues continued with Ringling Barnum until the Scranton closing of the show in 1938. The statue number was

Seven of the gold "Brengk Girls" are shown here in the back yard of the Hagenbeck show in 1914. Pfening Collection.



not part of the show that went to the Al G. Barnes Circus.

In 1935 gold statues were used on the Barnes show. Joe and Lillie LaForm, of trap-eze fame appeared in gold paint with Barnes that year. Mayme Ward, who is now designing and making the costumes for the Milwaukee parade was in charge of the gold acts on the Barnes show during this period. In 1937 a girl painted gold appeared on an elephant in the Barnes spec, however the elephant was not gold as on Ringling in 1933.

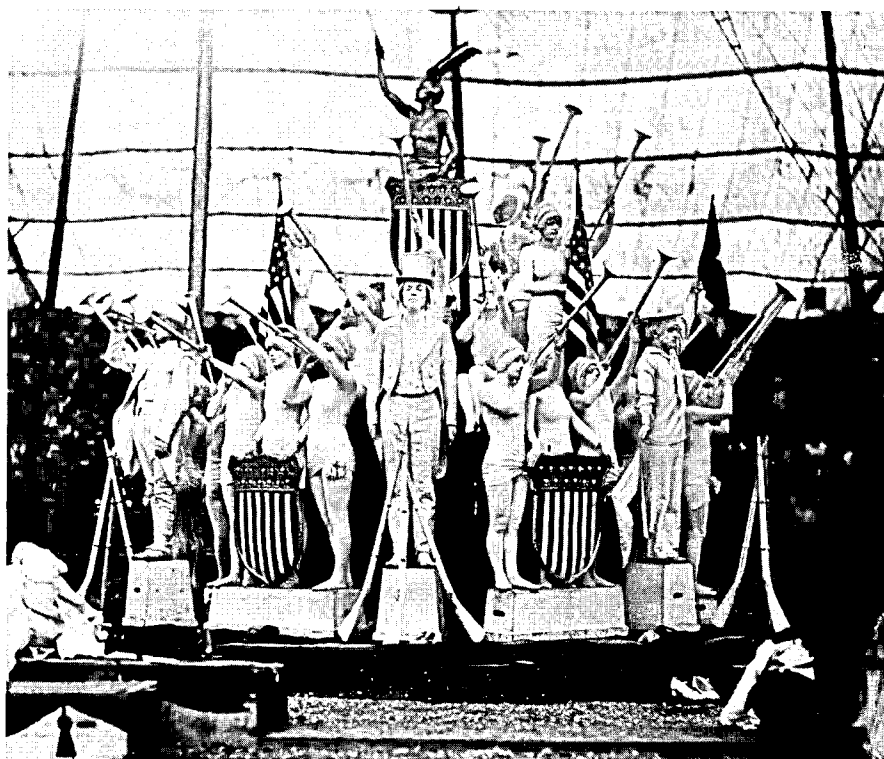
Statue acts were used on the Cole Bros. Circus as late as the early 1940s, however these were of the white variety and the girls did not use make up on the faces. In 1943 the Ringling Barnum show used a girl painted gold in the spec during the Madison Square Garden date. To the best of our knowledge this was the last appearance of a body painted person on a circus in the United States.



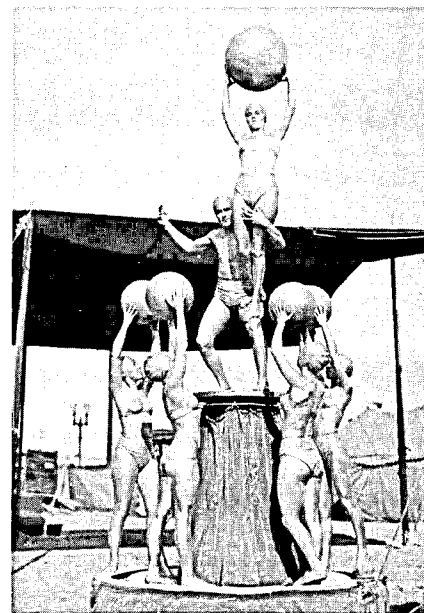
In addition to the statue acts, a number of acrobatic and balancing acts have used gold body paint. The Apollo Trio appeared with Barnum & Bailey in 1910 using gold paint. The Spurgat Brothers presented an amazing contortion act using gold. Through the years many acts of this nature have appeared in Europe and some on the stage in America. But there are only a few continuing to use gold today. The Circo Americano in Spain has used a gold balancing act for a number of years. We saw one with the show in October of 1968.

Because this act was so traditional nearly every show until 1930 presented a statue act. Even the Campbell, Bailey & Hutchison Circus used a white act, the Elmer Jones 2 car shows used a posing white horse with white costumed rider.

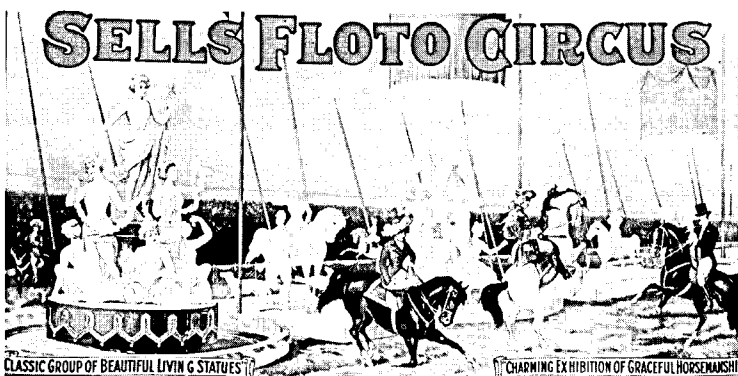
A number of lithographs were used to advertise the statue acts, some of them are reproduced here. — Fred D. Pfening, Jr.



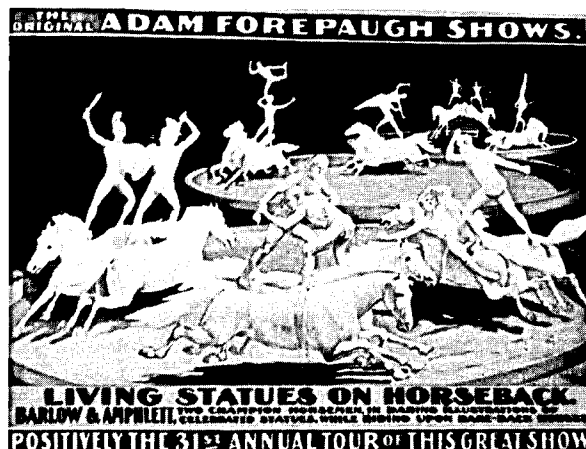
A patriotic scene is shown here as it appeared in the 1923 performance of the Ringling Barnum Circus. Sverre Braathen Collection.



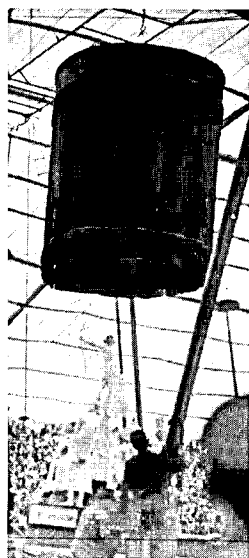
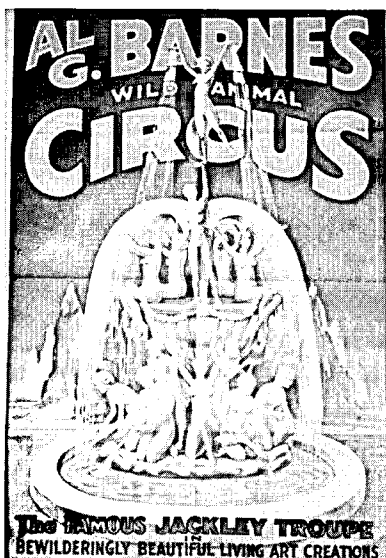
Joe LaForm and his group are shown in the backyard of the Barnes show in 1935. Betty Schmid Collection.



Harold Dunn Collection.



Harold Dunn Collection.





THE FIELDING BANDCHARIOTS

By Richard E. Conover

Reviewed By Fred D. Pfening, III

Circus historiography began in 1861 when T. Allston Brown, a New York theatrical agent, wrote a series of circus history articles for the *New York Clipper*. This landmark work focused mainly on the careers of then contemporary circus personages such as Rufus Welch. In the late 1800's and early 1900's important contributions to circus history were made by Louis E. Cooke, Charles Day, John Dingess, and John Glenroy. These men, with the exception of bareback rider Glenroy, were famous circus agents during that period.

The year 1898 is another important date in circus historiography. That year Isaac Greenwood made the first scholarly inquest into the history of the circus. Although his *The Circus, Its Origin and Growth Prior to 1835* is erroneous in places, it nevertheless is the first attempt of a person outside the business to delve into the history of the circus. With one very important exception, the era of circus men writing circus history ended.

That exception was Earl Chapin May's monumental *The Circus From Rome to Ringling* written in 1932. It has withstood the test of time, and is still probably the best general book on circus history; it is certainly more readable than the four that have been published since. This book deals with the important figures in circus history such as the Flatfoots, Barnum and, of course, the Ringlings.

Starting in 1926 Charles Gates Sturtevant began his series of biographies of famous circus men in the *White Tops*. For the next twenty-five years he was the most prolific writer of circus history. His articles have become excellent starting points for further inquiry into circus history because of their general accuracy.

Today Joseph T. Bradbury is the most energetic writer of circus history. In the first issue of the enlarged *Bandwagon* in 1957 he began a series that recorded the history of most of the

famous 20th century parade wagons. These articles, which continued well in the 1960's, presented much previously unpublished material. Currently he devotes his energies to histories of various shows during specific years.

Through these and many other historians, past and present, we contemporary historians have a wealth of secondary sources to draw from. To find what happened to the Buck Jones Wild West Show, or to find what transpired in Somers, New York, in January, 1935 one has only to thumb through his back files of the *White Tops* and *Bandwagon*, or open one of many books.

But, before Richard E. Conover told us the history of the Fielding band chariots, the Barnum and London carved cages, and finally straightened out the history of the Five Graces we had only fragmentary and too often inaccurate references to depend on. This is why *The Fielding Bandchariots* is such an important book.

He doesn't give the complete story, nobody can at this moment; but it is still a very significant work because it tells, for the first time, all that is currently known about the famous wagons built by the Fielding wagon company in New York City.

Author Conover devotes almost two-thirds of his sixty-four pages to the histories of the seven known examples of Fielding band chariot craftsmanship. Not a single word has previously been written on two of these seven wagons, and a tremendous amount of new information is presented on the other five.

The chapters on the Van Amburgh and O'Brien chariots are the best, not only because they present the most new information on their Fielding chariots; but also because they are the first attempt to unravel the complex activities of Hyatt Frost and John V. O'Brien. These show histories are quite concise, and it seems doubtful that too much more can be added to Conover's discoveries.

The chapter on the Five Graces is a classic. In eleven pages Conover finally tells us why the Graces always got en-

tangled in telephone wires, while our other three telescopers never seemed to have this trouble. The author's explanation is the most exciting revelation that I have learned in my nine years or so of research. The book is worth buying just to learn this.

Conover's closing chapter on the Barnum and London carved cages is of the same excellent quality as the rest of the book, although a more liberal use of photographs could have made it better.

The pictures are superb. Of the fifty pictures in the book, over half have never appeared in print before. They are all large enough, and a tip of the hat should go to the printer for the clearness of them.



The Five Graces Bandwagon is shown after its topmount was removed. Original photo in the Conover Collection.

What makes this book truly unique is that it is footnoted, which greatly enhances the readability of the work.

This book is indeed a landmark work. It tells a highly complex story that only author Conover knew in full. I don't believe I could recommend a more scholarly book on circus history than this one. It will be a long time before we will be able to learn so much in a single sitting. Perhaps the significance of this book can best be expressed by the fact that in *The Fielding Bandchariots* Richard E. Conover has answered questions the rest of us did not know enough to ask.

MINUTES OF 1969 ANNUAL MEETING CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The 1969 meeting of the Circus Historical Society was called to order by Gaylord Hartman, President at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, June 28, 1969, in the Baraboo Elks Club. President Hartman welcomed all present and reported that 78 had already registered for the convention and that more were coming in. He then called for the secretary's report.

Dave Price, secretary, reported that 145 new members had joined since the 1967 annual meeting, 21 old members had been reinstated, and 17 had been lost by death. He also reported on a resolution that had been passed by unanimous vote of the directors which added Alaska and Hawaii to Division #8.

President Hartman appointed Bob Good of Pa., John Boyle and Don Hensley, both of Wisconsin as a committee on resolutions to prepare a resolution of thanks to all who had helped to make the convention a success. They presented their report later in the meeting. Hartman then called for a treasurer's report.

Julian Jimenez presented an up to date audit of the C. H. S. books as required by article IV. The full report is published elsewhere in *Bandwagon*.

President Hartman then called upon Vice President Richard Conover and *Bandwagon* Editor Fred Pfenning for short reports. Conover spoke of some of the program plans for the convention including the excellent lectures by Mr. Fred Freid of Washington, D.C., and Sverre Braathen of Wisconsin. Editor Pfenning mentioned the emergence of several new writers in the last year or so. He also discussed some of the upcoming issues, and advised that nearly 1200 copies of the last *Bandwagon* were mailed.

The president introduced Bette Leonard and Bob Parkinson. Then followed the reading of the Division reports. Fred D. Pfenning, Jr. reported in person for the 1st division. All other divisions reported by letter except #3 and #7.

Earl Schmid of Pennsylvania brought up the idea of including applications for membership in an issue of *Bandwagon* so that all members might have a copy on hand. Bob Parkinson suggested that a notice in *White Tops* might be more effective as it would reach more non members. C.F.A. President Gene McDonald of Washington said that a swap-out notice arrangement between the two associations could be worked out.

As new business was called for Sverre O. Braathen of Wisconsin presented the convention with a resolution which appears elsewhere in *Bandwagon*. After a second by Fred Pfenning and some suggestions as to wording by Bob

Parkinson, Dr. John Draper, and Bette Leonard, the resolution passed.

Fred D. Pfenning, Jr. then reported on his and Joe McKennon's visit to the 4th International Congress of Circus Fans in Barcelona, Spain, in September, 1968. He then presented the following resolution: Resolved that the members attending the 1969 annual convention of the Circus Historical Society empower the Board of Directors to invite the International Congress of Circus Fans to come to the United States for their 6th International Congress.

The resolution was seconded by Joe McKennon who added that he would personally guarantee banquet dinners for foreign delegates at the affair. The resolution passed.

The resolutions committee then presented their resolution of thanks.

Our old friend W. H. B. Jones of the great state of Mississippi rose to say a few words about our encouraging John Swann to take up publication of the *Circus Review* again.

The report of the Election Commission was called for. Art Gunther of

Connecticut, Bob McDougall of California, and Sverre O. Braathen made up the commission. Chairman Braathen rose to read the nominations of the commission.

Charles W. "Chang" Reynolds of California was the nomination for the office of president. Eric Wilson of Iowa was nominated by John 'Doc' Bolye. Wilson declined. Bob Good was nominated by Fred Pfenning. Good declined. Bob McDougall was nominated by Dave Price. McDougall declined. There being no other nominations, the nominations for president were declared closed.

The commission made two nominations for vice president: Fred D. "Rick" Pfenning, III of Ohio and Maurice Alaire of Maine. There being no nominations from the floor, the nominations were closed by motion of Bette Leonard, second of Bob McDougall, and vote of the assembly.

There were two nominations for secretary: Verne Fussell of Iowa and Ed Cripps of Ontario. As no other nominations came from the floor, nominations were closed by motion of Joe McKen-

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S 30TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Julian Jimenez, Treas.

Receipts and Disbursements for the Period May 1, 1968 thru April 30, 1969.

Bank Balance, 5/1/68	\$4,293.34
Receipts:	
Members Dues	\$5,409.00
Advertising	382.00
New Members	367.77
Subscriptions to <i>Bandwagon</i>	844.00
Sale of Back Issues	1,223.19
	8,225.96
Disbursements:	
<i>Bandwagon</i> Printing	\$6,358.71
Printing Membership Cards	66.90
Addressing Machine & Supply Co.	70.66
Telephone Calls	33.40
<i>Bandwagon</i> Postage	340.00
<i>Bandwagon</i> Mailing	210.00
Other Postage	125.00
Treasurer Supplies	28.14
Secretary Supplies	132.78
President's Expense	20.65
Flowers	7.73
Envelopes	322.89
I-D Badges	10.12
Printing Roster	470.00
Treasurer Bond	25.00
Accountant Fee	25.00
Crating for File Cabinet	7.00
Refund on Unsold <i>Bandwagons</i>	18.80
Bank Charges	2.56
Morris Harvey College-Memorial	10.00
	8,285.34

Disbursements over Income (59.38)

Bank Balance as of April 30, 1969 \$4,233.96

EVELYN D. RUNYAN, PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT



Seven Presidents of the Circus Historical Society were in Milwaukee. Five are shown here. Left to right are Bob Parkinson, Walter W. Tyson, Bette Leonard, John Van Matre and the current President Gaylord Hartman. On hand but not in the photo were Fred D. Pfening, Jr. and Don F. Smith. Albert Conover Photo.

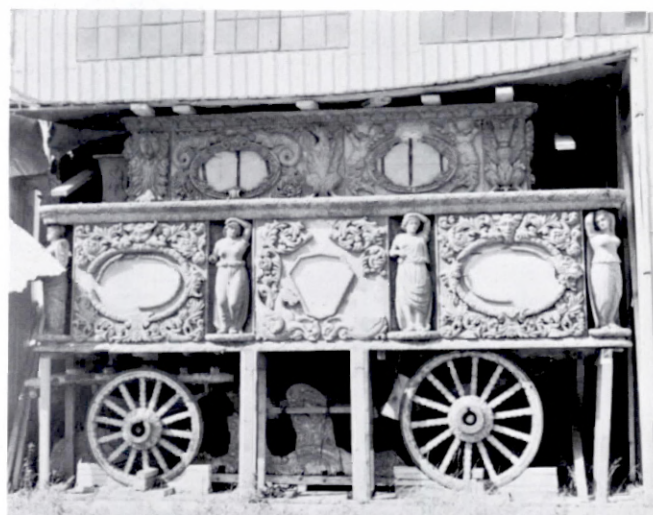
non, second of Earl Schmid, and vote of the assembly.

The committee presented two names for treasurer: *Julian Jimenez* and *Leland Antes* of Texas. There being no nominations from the floor, nominations were closed by motion of Fred D. Pfening, Jr., second of Al Conover, and vote of the assembly.

Bob Parkinson asked that the directors be asked to suggest someone to succeed them. Mike Sporrer of Washington mentioned that they should be people who can attend the conventions. L. A. Scharck of Ohio brought up the *Amusement Business* listing of the Society's address.

On the motion of Sverre O. Braathen, second of John Draper, and vote of the assembly, the meeting was closed.

Another wagon new to the parade this year was the reproduction of the Barnum & Bailey Our Country, shown in the parade with a six horse hitch. Albert Conover Photo.



The Fosset Circus wagons arrived in Baraboo a week or so before the parade. Two large shipping crates were opened so the sides of the wagons could be inspected during the CHS convention. The large telescoping bandwagon is shown in this view. Albert Conover Photo.

CONVENTION ATTENDEES

Alabama

E. W. Elam

Arizona

Daniel S. Gabert

California

Don Francis
Bob McDougall
Gene Moreland

Canada

Dr. Gordon Brown
Norma Tremaine
Barclay Tremaine

Connecticut

Arthur Gunther
Bill Donahue
Lillian Donahue
Joe Myers

Florida

Wesley Brown
Dorothy Brown
Gale Brown

Iowa

Eric Wilson
Betty Wilson
William McFann
Bill McFann
John Holley
Paul Holley
Robert Holley

Kansas

Julian Jimenez
Bette Leonard
John Marietta
Jim McRoberts

Illinois

Steve Seipp
Tom Parkinson
Paul Ingrassia
Charles Sbarbaro
Sandra Sbarbaro

Massachusetts

Joseph J. Bourgeois
Rev. Edward Sullivan
Clyde Reynolds

Mississippi

W. H. B. Jones, Esq.
Trudie Jones

New Jersey

Charles Currie

New York

Fred Freid
Paul Neff
Clayton Hawkes
Richard Britton
Gordon Turner
Louis Brusie
Oscar S. Decker
W. C. Fields

North Carolina

Joe W. McKennon

Nebraska

C. C. Day
Mrs. C. C. Day

Ohio

John W. Boyle
Richard Conover
Fritzie Conover
Al Conover
L. A. "Dude" Schrack
Ruthie Schrack
Fred Pfening, Jr.
Lee Pfening
Rick Pfening
Tim Pfening
Ronald Powell
Ben J. Kronberger
Billy Watsch

Oklahoma

Ted LaVelda
Danny LaVelda

Pennsylvania

Gaylord Hartman
Rev. Robert Hartman
Mrs. Robert Hartman
Bob Good
Margaret Good
Anna Leech
Howard Leech
Earl Schmid
Betty Schmid
Jeffery Schmid
Denniston Berkery

Texas

Dave Price

Virginia

Robert Neilson
John P. Yancey
Marcus F. Ritger

Washington

Mike Sporrer
Ralph Decker
Charles McDonald
Mrs. Charles McDonald

West Virginia

J. Paul Rusk

Mrs. J. Paul Rusk

Wisconsin

Don Hensey
Sverre Braathen
Faye Braathen
Bob Parkinson
Mrs. Bob Parkinson
Gregg Parkinson
Cal Bergner
Maida Bergner
Tom Butler
Bill Uthmeier
Melvin Hintz
Clark Wilkinson
Hallie Olstadt
Chappie Fox
Charles Kitto
Robert Gollmar
Jack Stagg
Gordon W. Yaden
John Harriot
Mary Ruth Harriot
William Rotzoll
Lexy Rotzoll

BARABOO

By Donald L. Hensey

Early arrivals to the thirtieth convention of the CHS were treated to some violent thunderstorms on Thursday evening. However, the morning of the opening of the convention was sunny and pleasant with a nice breeze. By ten o'clock twenty had registered at the Elks Club, the former home of Al Ringling in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Amid much handshaking and back slapping, conventioners greeted each new arrival. Upon registering each historian was presented with a packet containing a program, banquet ticket, and a folder of sightseeing material.

After these formalities it was off to the Circus World Museum grounds to catch the 11:00 performance of the one-

ring circus. This year the Herriots have been presenting their fine and effective show. Of great interest to the people who had not been here last year was the new wagon building. The new addition to the wagon building — which is drawing many favorable comments—are the many huge posters that are mounted on cloth and then by means of rope and grommets are strung to metal pipe frames. Much photographing of these beautiful works of circus art took place. These are predominately Ringling, Barnum and Bailey, and Buffalo Bill.

In the afternoon it was open house at the museum's library where we were the guests of Bob Parkinson. Some took the opportunity to get in some research, while others browsed around through the variety of material. Several of us were able to get our first glimpses of the newly acquired English circus wagons. Two of the crates had been opened, and we could get a one side view of these wagons. One can hardly wait until they are paraded next year in Milwaukee. These wagons are intricately and delicately carved masterpieces.

Friday evening historians made their way to the Elks Club by 7:30 to participate in the program which was arranged by Dick Conover. The first speaker on the program was Mr. Sverre Braathen who presented a paper on "The Parallel Development of Bands and Circuses in America." This was an extremely interesting look at an important part of circus history. Following Mr. Braathen, Mr. Frederick Freid a new member from New York City gave a lecture illustrated by slides on some aspects of wood carvings as related to the circus. Mr. Freid is the author of *Carrousel*.

The program next turned to circus movies. We had about one hour and a half of films, and there were still more to go before we called it quits. Denny Berkery led off with five reels of film showing the Al G. Barnes circus of 1937. He followed this with films of the Robbins Bros. of 1938, and some short scenes of the Hunt Bros. and Dailey Bros. Also included were Ringling of 1939 and Tom Mix of 1938. These were all very fine films and gave the viewer many nostalgic moments. Following Mr. Berkery's presentation Bob McDougal took over the camera. Bob showed a color film of the Al G. Barnes seasons 1937 and 1938. To conclude we saw a film of Ringling Bros. of 1939. If one wasn't bleary eyed by this time, he was free to join in the refreshments served in the basement of the establishment.

Saturday morning the business session got underway at the Elks club with Gaylord Hartman, our president, presiding. The minutes of this meeting will be found in another place in this edition. Then it was off to lunch before



Gay Hartman stands by while Dick Conover admires the CHS Appreciation Plaque, presented to Conover by Dr. H. H. Conley, on the right. Albert Conover Photo.



An additional stock car was used on the 1969 train. The car came from the James E. Strates carnival, and was ablaze with a beautiful paint and lettering job done by Cal and Maida Bergner. Albert Conover Photo.

beginning the round of the afternoon activities.

Early afternoon found most of the members on the show grounds to wit-

The work team of elephants pulled the Lee Bros.-Ken Maynard wagon in the parade. An air calliope was inside. Albert Conover Photo.



ness the circus parade before the afternoon performance in the hippodrome. The members attended in a body and were acknowledged by Mr. Paul Luckey. As the show ended about 3:15, we had to hurry to the next scheduled event. Boarding a school bus we were given a thorough tour of Baraboo's historic circus homes and the cemetery. Paul Luckey was our narrator and a splendid job he did.

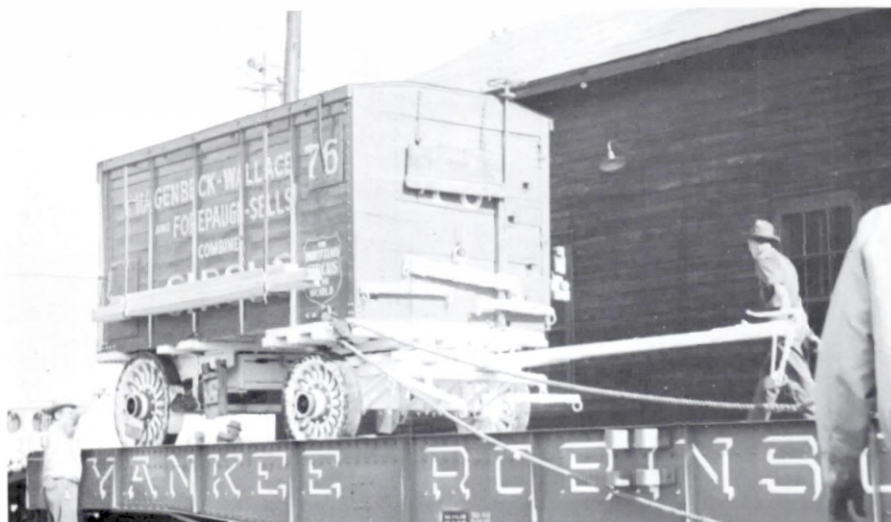
Saturday evening found us back at the Elks Club for our banquet. The ballroom was brightly decorated for the occasion. Mrs. Dick Conover was the chairman of the decorating committee.

A wonderful roast beef dinner was served under the supervision of Wisconsin's elephant historian and loop the loop rider Hallie Olstadt. After dinner Mr. Hartman, acting as equestrian director, presented Mayor Bill Hummel of Baraboo, who conveyed to us the best wishes of the city and also greetings from Governor Knowles. Mr. G. MacDonald, president of the CFA, and his wife were presented next. The same

recognition was accorded Mr. Donahue, president of the CMB. Mrs. Bette Leonard was asked to stand and received a standing ovation from the members. We had two past presidents of the CHS in attendance, Fred Pfening and Bob Parkinson.

The first speaker of the evening was Dr. Bonham. Dr. Bonham operated the Bonham Circus in the early twenties playing in the upper Middle West. In his talk he shared with us some of the hardships and some of the joys of operating a small truck and wagon show. Chappie Fox then told us about the acquisition of the English circus wagons. This is a really interesting story and has received much publicity in newspapers. Later in the evening we saw part of a film made in England showing the place where the wagons were found and their being made ready to send to the United States. As sometimes happens, the bulb of the movie projector burned out, and we were unable to see all of it.

Judge Gollmar presented a Ringling poster to Clarke Wilkinson, who is the secretary of the Circus World Museum board, for his long and faithful service with the museum. The next presentation



was a plaque to Mr. Dick Conover for his scholarly work on circus history. It was to be presented by Dr. H. Conley, but he was unable to be at the banquet, so Bob Parkinson served in his place.

The second speaker for the evening was Frank Larkin, who was in the billing car on a number of the big railroad shows of the past. His talk was entitled, "Billposting Experiences and Front Door Experiences." Mr. Tom Parkinson, who was the former circus editor on the *Billboard* magazine and is now manager of the University of Illinois Arena, gave a short talk. Mr. Fred Pfening was next on the program, and he presented to the museum the Ringling flag that flew over the big top when the top was struck for the last time in Pittsburgh in 1956. This was truly a nostalgic moment as the murmur of the people at the banquet testified. Chappie Fox accepted the gift for the museum, and commented it would be displayed at once.

Following this, a proclamation by Governor Knowles was read in which he proclaimed July 4th Circus Day in Wisconsin. John Herriot then gave his

An additional Hagenbeck-Wallace baggage wagon was used in Milwaukee this year. This one carried the Hagenbeck-Wallace and Forepaugh-Sells title. Albert Conover Photo.

"Old Showman's Heaven". It is sad to note that new names have been added since the last reading. This is really a gem of circus literature, and it is becoming a tradition at circus banquets in Baraboo.

To close the program we had the now famous "candy pitch" with John Herriot doing the announcing. Candy butchers were Gene MacDonald, John Boyle, and Al Conover. Everyone received a share of that tasty candy plus a nice little prize in the box. Included in the box for the super prizes were numbers which corresponded to a prize of circusianna. Julian Jimenez received a Candy Bar.

With this activity the thirtieth convention of the CHS came to a close. It was an occasion to be remembered,

Two of the Circus World Museum elephants were used this year in loading and unloading the train. Albert Conover Photo.



and your correspondent feels that the one hundred or so people who attended will surely remember it as a very worthwhile convention.

All who attended agreed it had been the finest convention in CHS history.

OLD MILWAUKEE DAYS

By Donald L. Hensey

Many of the historians who attended the convention in Baraboo, stayed on until Monday to watch the loading of the circus train and its departure from Baraboo early on the morning of July 1st. Some were fortunate enough to be able to ride the train to Milwaukee. Others followed in their cars. The trip on the train was a seven hour ride. Many spectators lined the route to wave as the train rolled by. In each hamlet and town people turned out to witness one of circusdom's greatest spectacles. Pulled this year by two diesels — which brought cries of anguish from the lovers of the steam engines — the train was only fifteen minutes late coming on to the siding. It might be added that this is the closest that the circus train has been to being on time in the years that it has been making the run. Thousands of people were on hand to greet the train, take pictures, and thrill to the grand sight of a circus train. As the train crawled to the end of its journey, the discordant notes of the America steam calliope added the proper touch to the gay and exciting day. Unloading commenced immediately with the Lion and Mirror Bandwagon being the first off the runs. The first cut of cars was unloaded within an hour. On hand in Milwaukee was Past President Walter W. Tyson, who was greeted warmly by many old members.

Wednesday morning the lot was a scene of furious activity as wagons were spotted, equipment for the free acts was set up, and swarms of school children — most of them from various art classes — arrived on the lot. Circus fans began to gather at the special tent that is provided each year for the CHS, CMB, and the CFA by the Schlitz Brewing Company. Gaylord Hartman assumed charge of the meeting place. The hundred red circus chairs were unloaded from the Kangaroo Tab and placed in the tent by a two man working crew of Dick Conover and Donald Hensey. The circus fans' sign was placed over the entrance, and the side walls were raised because of the warmth of the day.

CHS Presidents Don Smith, Walter Tyson, John Van Matre, Bette Leonard, Fred Pfening, Bob Parkinson joined Gay Hartman to enjoy the excitement on the Lakefront.

By noon huge crowds of people were on the grounds, and the circus fans were gathered groups, greeting old

friends, discussing the exciting events to come, and reliving past days of the circus. Some took time to sell some of their circus memorabilia. Six horse hitches began the task of practicing with the wagons they were assigned to pull in the parade. The cry then was a variation of the old parade route cry, "Hold your children, the horses are coming." Free circus acts were presented by the Herriots, Pat Anthony, and Tony Diano. In addition to these Gene Holter's Movieland Animal Show was situated on the grounds. As the day moved along, more and more horses arrived in big vans. This was due to continue almost until parade time. By that time over five hundred horses were on hand. Night fell, but talk sessions in the fans tent were still going strong.

Thursday the grounds became crowded quickly as the people sensed the quickening activity in preparation for the circus parade. Teams of horses continued to arrive. The free acts drew their share of attention from the throngs who pressed against the snow fence to watch. At the tent for the three circus groups, more circus people arrived as the day ran on. By the end of Thursday approximately two hundred and eighty people had signed the register that was kept at the door. Talk ran on and on as fans greeted each new comer and speculated on seasons and events to come in the circus world. But everywhere it was circus, circus, circus with all that the word denotes and connotes.

To those who rose early on Friday, the day of the parade, their hearts may have done a flip-flop because the skies promised everything but a fine day. Clouds hung ominously low over Milwaukee lake front. It wasn't long after dawn that a drizzle began and continued intermittently through the morning hours. Nevertheless the parade preparations went ahead in a frenzy. The chugging of the caterpillar tractors, the shouts of bosses, the creak of wagon

This smaller bandwagon from the Fosset Circus in England is shown here. A total of ten wagons were in the group. Albert Conover Photo.



wheels, the clomp of horses' hooves on the asphalt intermingled with the urgent voices giving commands over the public address system was indeed a strange cacophony to the bystander who desperately tried to gather all the excitement in to be treasured through the years. Colorful banners were put in place on the wagons by laboring circus fans. Horses were harnessed in their silver and brass studded gear. On the elephants were thrown multi-hued blankets. Rainbow bouquets of costumes, laboriously sewed and fitted by Mame Ward and her staff through the intervening months since the last parade, were handed out from the wardrobe wagons to participants who dodged their way through crowds, wagons, mud and the drizzle that was falling to the dressing tents. Intermittently the public address system blared forth the amount of time til two o'clock. Chappie Fox and his staff of parade officials huddled under the awning of the office wagons — Sells-Floto ticket wagon and the old Ringling red ticket wagon —

JOHN SMITH DIES AT 90

John Smith, veteran circus man, passed away at the Paul Kelly Circus Farm near Peru, Indiana on Friday, June 20, 1969 at the age of 90 years. "Captain John", as he was known to thousands of friends and admirers, spent his entire life in show business and was associated with all of the leading circuses at one period or another during his long life time.

Although he was most famous as a horse trainer, Mr. Smith also trained and presented elephant and seal acts during the early part of his career. The most famous of the many horses that he broke and trained was the famous "Black Beauty" owned by Mrs. Al Ringling, and a special feature of the Ringling Bros. show for many years.

In addition to his work with Ringling Brothers, Mr. Smith was also with Howes Great London Show, Gollmar Bros.; Christy Bros.; John Robinson, and Al G. Barnes. After the formation of The American Circus Corporation, he joined the Floto show.

When the Cole Bros. Circus was organized in 1935, Mr. Smith and his old friend and partner WAXEY DYKES, veteran circus harness maker, came to Rochester, Indiana to join the new show. They both remained with Cole Bros. until the show closed down in 1950 at which time Mr. Dykes rejoined Ringling Bros. while Mr. Smith came to Peru to take care of Cole Bros. interests at their old winter quarters. When Floyd King and Arnold Malley formed the King Show in 1954 with some of the stock and equipment from the defunct Cole Show, Mr. Smith joined them and stayed with the King Show until it closed in 1956, and then re-

alternately looking at the sky and then at their watches. Pausing now and then in their animated conversation, they would shout an order. At last everything was in its place. Horses were hitched; riders were mounted; bands were in position; and the best of all that could have happened, the skies suddenly cleared, and the sun thrust itself out behind the clouds as if to say that Old Sol would have no part in spoiling the greatest parade of all. The bands struck up the old circus marches; the drivers shouted their commands; the wagons began to rumble the tune of far off years; the beautiful girls smiled; and the grandest of all circus parades began its annual sentimental journey down the sawdust trail of yesteryear to prove that the circus will never die in the hearts of the old nor in the eyes of the young.

Although many fans left after the parade, two more days of events were scheduled on the lakefront. Some historians remained to see the train loaded for its trip back to Baraboo on Monday.

turned to Peru with the equipment from the King Show when the latter was purchased by Paul Kelly.

"Captain John" was known and respected by all circus people as one of the great horse trainers of all time. The general public will probably remember him best for his famous White Stallions Act which received 24 sheet billing during the hey-day of the Cole Bros. Show. Only a master trainer could have broken the magnificent White Stallion to perform their unique "boxing" act, and the equally spectacular hind-leg walked around the hippodrome. In 1960 Mr. Smith presented a Pony Drill for Paul Kelly at the Circus World Museum. His last public performance was at Palisades Park, when Paul Kelly took his show there in 1963. The last years of his long, eventful life were spent with Paul and Dorothy Kelly at their Old Winter Quarters Circus Farm, Peru, Indiana. — Frank Fisher

Capt. John Smith is shown with one of his boxing horses on Cole Bros. Circus in 1943. Burt Wilson Photo.



